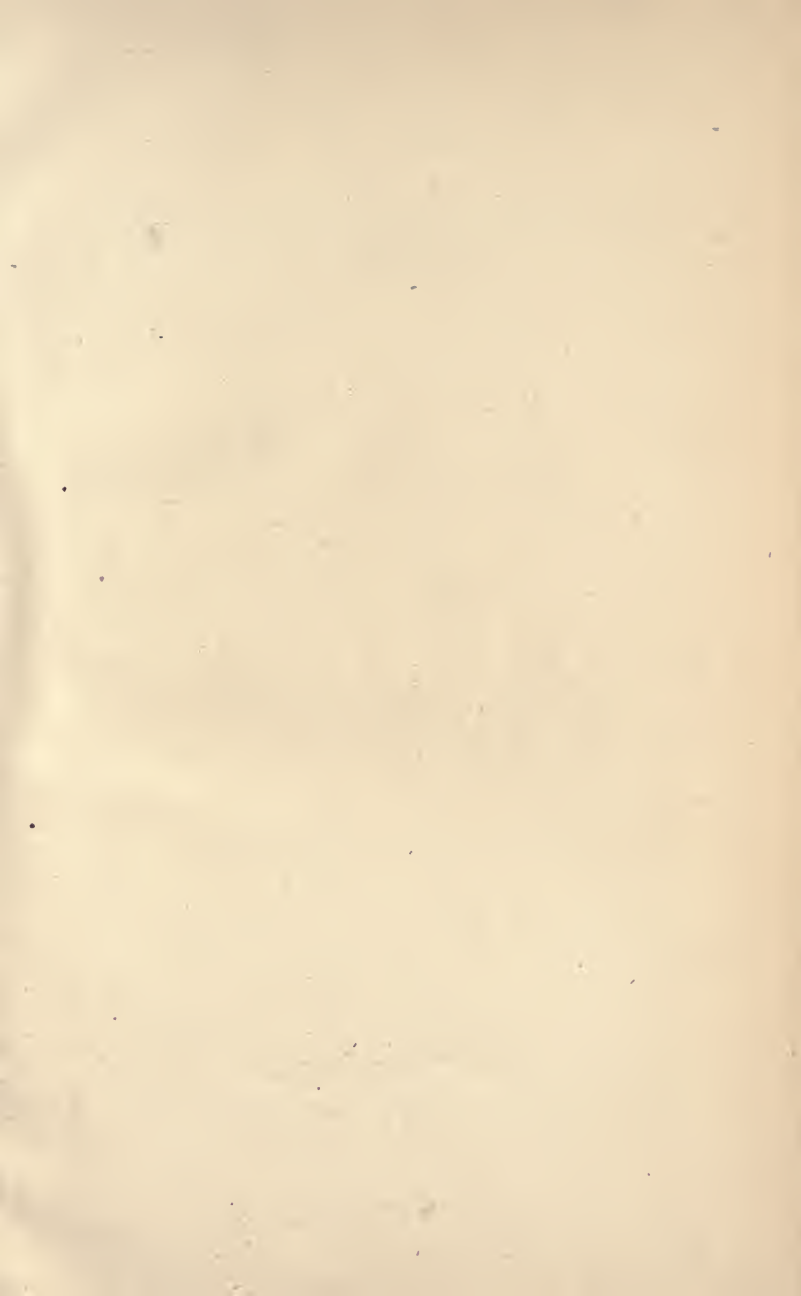


ATHERINE

PEARLE



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"I—I AM SURE I WISH YOU WELL," SHE SAID, HESITATINGLY.—Page 112.

KATHERINE EARLE.

BY

MISS ADELINE TRAFTON, *Knox*

AUTHOR OF "AN AMERICAN GIRL ABROAD,"
ETC.

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TO

THE GENTLEST CRITIC IN THE WORLD,

My Mother,

I DEDICATE THIS BOOK.

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KATHERINE EARLE.



CHAPTER I.

THE HEROINE MAKES A VERY AWKWARD LITTLE BOW.

THERE stood upon Poplar Street in Boston, twenty years or more ago, one of those great wooden mansions in which our forefathers of pre-revolutionary times delighted — the embodied conception, to their minds, of elegant homes. Progress and so-called necessity, and, above all, the restless spirit of Young America, are now fast sweeping them from sight. This has been gone for years, and a brick school-house reared in its place, where, most appropriately, ideas of progress, utility, and irreverence for the old and useless are implanted in the minds of the rising generation.

The street is still narrow, the expansion of mind which has gradually enlarged the borders, the pharisaical spirit of greed and gain which has made wide the phylacteries in other parts of the city, having done little or nothing here. It was at that time, and is now, a line between affluence upon one hand and

respectable poverty, looking towards squalor, upon the other. Block after block — with this one exception — of brick or stone houses filled the street; chrysalides, from which the old inhabitants have long since winged their way to airier and more elegant quarters.

The Earle house, of which we speak, stood upon the right hand, where the street bends to fall towards the glimmer of water lined off with masts, faintly perceptible between the dull rows of ugly houses, at their termination. Its face was turned away from the street, and its old eyes stared across the narrow strip of yard upon a blank brick wall. There had been gardens about it once, in the far-off time when the family was rich and held its own; then, too, green meadows stretched away from the garden wall down to the water's edge. In those days, when his majesty's troops were quartered in the town, General Gage had more than once honored the house with his presence. The wine-glass could still be shown which he had drained, and, smiling down now from among the portraits upon the walls was a fair Delphine Earle, with powdered hair and in shining brocade, into whose ears he had whispered stately compliments. Ah, how the beautiful garden blossomed with gold lace and scarlet uniforms — a gorgeous century plant, nipped later by New England frosts! But times changed; wealth and power slipped away from the family. The town grew into a city; meadows and gardens disappeared; only the old house, dingy, forlorn, — a wreck of its former self, — remained.

It was a cosy, old-fashioned room, where the Earle family were assembled one winter evening, twenty-

five years ago. The faded, heavy hangings over the windows, the carved straight-backed chairs, the massive round centre-table, with lion's claws for its support, the wide, tarnished frames upon the walls, enclosing dim old portraits, even the soft confusion of warm, worn colors under one's feet, told of substantial wealth and comfort — but, alas ! of the wealth and comfort of a former generation.

A low fire snapped and flamed upon the hearth. Before it, in one of the high-backed chairs, sat the mother of the family. The face, although faded, was still beautiful in its outline. The hair, brown and smooth, was put away under a head-dress in the form of a turban of lace, which yet suggested a widow's cap. Her eyes rested thoughtfully upon the fire ; her thin, shapely hands held a little note as they lay crossed in her lap. Curled into a graceful heap upon the sofa in one corner, her arms under her head, her face turned with eager expectation towards her mother, was Delphine, the eldest of the three children, who, indeed, had outgrown childhood, and was eighteen and a beauty. Jack, five years younger, bent over his lessons at the centre-table, where Katey, almost eight, nestled close to his side, her head hidden in a book so large that she seemed to have vanished behind a folding screen.

" You can go if you wish to," the mother said at length, fingering the note in her hand ; " but — "

Delphine sat upright to clap her hands softly.

Jack raised his face. " I hate parties," he said, sententiously.

" How can you say so ? " returned Delphine, whose face flamed and shone at the vision the words had

called up — the rare bit of color in a dull life. “*You would like to go, Katey?*”

A pair of great dark eyes in the midst of a pale, absorbed face, a mass of dark hair hastily thrust back from a low, wide forehead, emerged from the covers of the book.

“*To go where?*” and the child gave a bewildered glance from one to the other.

“*Why, to Janie Home’s party, of course,*” Delphine explained, impatiently. Her bright, fresh nature, with its keen enjoyment of the present, had many a trial in Katey’s slow travelling home from a thousand miles away, where her thoughts seemed always wandering.

“*I don’t know;*” and one little brown elbow rested upon the book-cover, and one little brown cheek disappeared in the palm of her hand, as Katey proceeded to consider the subject. But Delphine had already forgotten her question. “*I shall have to wear the green pongee,*” she was saying, with a sigh, “*and those dreadful slippers! I only need a cap and bells,*” she added, with a shrug of her shoulders.

A warm color which was no reflection from the fire rose in Madam Earle’s face. Pride is the last to die. “*Perhaps you had better stay at home,*” she said.

But every mortification and pain had its bright side to light-hearted Delphine. “*I shall not mind, though, in the evening,*” she went on; “*and perhaps the slippers will be too small by another year, and so fall to Katey. Poor Katey! I’ll try and dance them out before that;*” and she laughed. No care could rest upon Delphine; no trouble could long shadow her face.

The slippers were one of those seeming blessings which in the end prove almost a curse. For a little time, several years before, an old actress had rented a room in the house, and one day, in looking over her treasures, had come upon these relics of past times, the rather tawdry magnificence of which had struck Delphine's fancy. They were of gray kid, profusely ornamented with gay silk embroidery somewhat faded, and tarnished gold braid; and when they were presented to the child her joy was full. She could not rest content until she had displayed them upon her feet, a world too large though they were; and one summer day she prevailed upon her mother to allow her to wear them to church. Poor Delphine! it was an experiment; ending as do so many among older and wiser people. Hardly had the great black gate swung to behind her before she became conscious of attracting an amount of attention upon which she had not reckoned. Stares met her, and whispered words, with suppressed laughter, followed her all the way. As she turned into Brattle Street, and approached the church where the Earles had worshipped since its foundation, every eye of the gathering crowd seemed bent in surprise and amusement upon her shoes. She might better have been shod in her naked feet. Too proud to turn back, she hastened on until the pew-door made a shelter and a refuge. Then, during the first prayer, while the congregation bowed, with any but a prayerful spirit in her angry heart, she slipped out of the church and ran home through the deserted streets. Since that day the slippers had shone with diminished lustre, and only by gas-light, upon the rare occasions when some of

the school-children entertained their friends. Even then they were regarded doubtfully by the girls, and would have won many a taunt and jeer from the boys, who go straight to the mark in such matters, but for Delphine's beauty, which made of every boy a courtier; and courtiers are smooth-tongued.

Katey sat quite still, lost in thought, though Delphine's voice, grown merry now, still went on. "What is it, kitten?" whispered Jack, struck at last by the strange attitude and absorbed face. "Don't you want to go to the party?"

She turned her eyes gravely upon him without speaking. Then she stealthily pushed her little foot out from under the short gown. There was a yawning rent upon one side of her shoe. "I have no others;" and the dark eyes displayed a depth of despair which touched Jack's heart. He thrust his freckled fingers into the red-brown hair hanging over his forehead, and stared at the page before him. Poor Jack! What wild impossible schemes were conjured up in his brain at that moment, as he felt the weight of the hardest of all poverty to bear — that which goes hand in hand with pride — good, honest pride, too, which is not to be scoffed and sneered at!

"I'll have 'em mended!" he whispered in sudden inspiration, coming down from a vision of dainty pink satin slippers to the practical and possible. "I'll take them to old Crinkle the first thing in the morning."

"Will you?" Katey nestled nearer to him. Dear old Jack! He made many a crooked way straight to the little feet. "Then I can go," and her face shone; "but I never saw a party in my life. What is it like?"

she added curiously, as though it had been some strange kind of an animal, for instance.

"Like — O, like — like —" but, failing in a simile, Jack came to a pause. He was bashful to a painful degree, and shrank always from notice. The party, from which there was no escape if Delphine were really going, was anything but a pleasure in anticipation, and yet he could not check Katey's eager interest.

"Why, they just walk round, you know, and show their fine clothes," he said at last.

"But we haven't any fine clothes!"

This was too true to be denied, and Jack was silenced for a moment; but a certain pain in the dark eyes made him go on hiding his own forebodings, and holding up only what was bright and pleasant before the child.

"And they play games."

"Do they?" exclaimed Katey, eagerly. Then, after a moment's pause, "though I don't know any games."

"And then there's the supper," Jack went on, almost persuading himself, as Katey's face brightened more and more. "That's best of all — ice-cream and oranges and things, you know. Heigh-ho!" he sighed; "I wish it was over," forgetting his part suddenly; but the sigh was lost upon Katey, who bent forward with clasped hands and upturned, glowing face, picturing it out in her mind, herself too insignificant a part of the bright vision to disturb her fancy. She drew a long, trembling breath. "I am sure I shall like it," she said softly, returning to her book, from which, however, she soon emerged again. "Will Dacre Home be there?"

"I suppose so," Jack answered, rather gruffly. He was deep in his lessons again by this time, and did not care to be disturbed.

"He's an awful boy," whispered the child, solemnly.

"That's so;" and Jack allowed his thoughts to wander again from the page before him. "Do you know," he went on in a burst of confidence, "I believe he'll be hung yet."

Katey's eyes opened round and horrified at the scene conjured up by his prophecy.

"Then they'd bring home his head," she added after a moment.

"Bring home his head?" repeated Jack.

"Yes; I read somewhere about Sir Thomas More; how they brought home his head to his family. I think," she added circumstantially, "that it was tied up in a napkin."

"He wasn't hung at all," said Jack, from the depth of superior wisdom; "he was beheaded."

"O!" Katey replied humbly. From Jack's final judgments she never appealed.

Jack was true to his promise, and carried the little shoe to be mended the next morning before breakfast. When he ran up the street after school at night, swinging it triumphantly by the string, a tiny figure, wrapped in a queer, old-fashioned cloak, waited for him between the heavy gate and one of the high posts surmounted by great black wooden balls. Dusky shadows were softening the staring red walls all around. Ghostly figures hastened down the street where the gas-lights were beginning to glimmer faintly. A cart, mysteriously full, had creaked over

the snow-covered pavements, and paused before the brilliantly-illuminated house across the way. Heavily-laden baskets were being lifted out and carried in, from which, to Katey's mind, the wonderful party was to be evolved. It was very cold out there in the wide crack between the gate and the post; but a warm thrill shot through the little body as the lights flamed out into the street, bringing one sudden, evanescent glimpse of glory before the shades were drawn.

"It is still damp, and a good deal drawn in on one side," said Jack, displaying the little shoe, which looked as though a bite had been taken out of it; "but you won't care."

Care? The little wet, half-worn shoe shone like Cinderella's slipper in Katey's eyes, as the great gate closed after them with a dull thud, and they hastened into the house.

"Come in; let me see if you are quite nice," called Madam Earle, an hour later, as she stood framed in the parlor door, while the children descended the stairs, a kind of halo about their young heads cast by the candle carried in black Chloe's hand.

Delphine danced forward into the fire-light, and gave a sweeping courtesy. The folds of the old green pongee — scant and not over bright — fluttered out as she bent to the floor. But against the dead green of her gown, her neck and arms shone pure white, and the merry brown eyes, raised to her mother's face, held a charm beyond pearls and diamonds. She thrust out her foot ruefully. It was encased in one of the fantastic slippers. A shadow crossed Madam Earle's face. She felt more keenly than they each

thorn which so very made to pierce the pride of her children.

"But I don't mind," Delphine said brightly. "I would sooner dance in my bare feet than sit in a corner in satin slippers." But Delphine would never sit in a corner; of that her mother was sure.

Then Katey crept out of the shadows, and stood timidly awaiting inspection.

"O Katey," laughed Delphine, "I can see nothing but your eyes and the great flowers on your gown!"

"Are they so very large?" and Katey looked anxiously down upon the old-fashioned brocade in which she was arrayed. It was covered with impossible roses, and had come down in various shapes and styles from a former generation, having been made over at last for Delphine in a fashion quite gone by, since which time it had descended to Katey.

"Are they so very large?" she repeated, as a moment of silence followed her question.

"Well, no," burst out Jack; "if you call them sunflowers, kitten, they are small."

Katey's eyes had turned imploringly to him. She gave a quick little gasp of pain, which he did not notice. Her mother's arm drew her forward.

"It is a very handsome piece of silk," she said, stroking it with her hand. "I have heard my mother say that when this gown was brought from England there was not another in the colony that could compare with it. It would almost stand alone."

"But it will never stand quite alone," laughed Delphine, to whom this consolation had been administered many times. "Unfortunately, some one of us will always have to stand in it."

"Never mind," whispered Jack in Katey's ear, as the heavy gate swung after them, and they emerged into the street; "nobody will notice you, and you look nice enough, any way; not handsome, of course, like Delphine."

"O, no," assented Katey, who was quite content to be thus estimated, and began to be cheered even so soon by Jack's equivocal praise. The little heart had been full of anxiety a moment before; but if Jack was satisfied it must be that she was equal to the occasion. Jack would know; he had been to parties before. Poor Jack! whose heart was heavy enough on his own account at that very moment.

"Why do you say so?" exclaimed Delphine, sharply. She had caught his words, low though they were. "You know we look as though we had come out of the ark. But I don't care;" and she ran up the steps. Carriages were crowding the narrow street; white-robed little forms were being lifted out and borne in tenderly. A gentleman brushed past them as they stood in the doorway; he carried a dainty figure in his arms. "Here, Pet, your flowers," as he set her down; and the little gloved hands received a miniature bouquet as the door was flung wide open. A soft, warm air, sweet with the scent of flowers, a blaze of light, the sound of music — all poured out to meet them. Katey, shivering with excitement, overcome with awe, stood still. "What are you waiting for?" It was Delphine's voice which roused her. Delphine's hand pulled her forward. She found herself mounting the stairs, led into a room musical with the tinkle of tiny belles transformed beyond all recognition — her schoolmates though many of them were.

"Is this the party?" she gasped.

"Don't be silly," Delphine replied. "This is the dressing-room—don't you see? Nothing but children!" she said aloud, as the maid, who had been fitting dainty slippers to tiny feet, came to meet them.

"Yes, miss," the girl replied, obsequiously; everybody gave pretty Delphine her due of honor and respect; "but it is early yet; and indeed there are some young ladies and gentlemen down stairs."

"I know it is early," Delphine replied carelessly, shaking out the clinging folds of the green pongee and drawing on her gloves; "but we are neighbors."

Katey, in the mean time, had removed her cloak, not without some hesitation and a throb of terror as to the result.

"O, what a funny dress!" exclaimed a little miss in white lace and pink satin ribbons, staring at the brocade gown.

"Such flowers! Why, Katey Earle!" added a school acquaintance, slipping out of a white opera cloak and drawing near.

"Jack says they are not as big as sunflowers," Katey ventured, deprecatingly.

"Of course not, you little goose;" and Delphine joined in the laugh which followed the words. "Come, it is time to go down." And, glad of any change, Katey followed her with tingling cheeks and a heavy, anxious heart.

CHAPTER II.

KATEY FINDS A FRIEND.

JACK was waiting for them just outside the dressing-room door. He had become all at once very stiff, and red-faced, and queer, and not like Jack at all. His hands seemed to have swollen, and protruded, very red and more freckled than ever, to an unusual length beyond the sleeves of his jacket; and why did he look so choked and strange about the neck? Katey, grown suddenly observant through painful experience, gave him a quick, searching glance from head to foot, mentally comparing him with the fine young gentlemen gathered at the head of the stairs. There was a difference, but in what it lay she could not tell; certainly boys' clothes were all alike, just jackets and trousers, she thought, enviously. But boys' clothes are not all alike, as poor Jack had found, to his sorrow, in that long ten minutes of waiting, the torments of which Katey fortunately did not know. She drew in a deep breath of comfort; she could bear the flaming brocade even, which refused to stand alone, if she were quite sure that Jack was not hurt.

"I'll find you a seat somewhere," said Delphine, when they had crossed the room and presented themselves to the little hostess, who received her guests with the assurance of years in society. A hush, then

a low titter, had followed them. Jack's face flamed, and the hands hanging awkwardly at his side clinched themselves for an instant. Delphine raised her head proudly, but her face grew white; only Katey, bewildered by the bright scene, heard nothing.

"There!" and Delphine tucked the child into a corner; "you can sit here until they begin to play," which Katey was only too glad to do. The first moment of confusion and bewilderment was past, and the room seemed suddenly full of strange, unfriendly eyes searching her out. She shrank as far from sight as possible. Jack lingered awkwardly beside her for a few moments; then the crowd swallowed him up. Delphine, too, disappeared; but, secure in her corner, Katey for the time was happy, in that pitiful, unnatural happiness for a child — the being permitted to look on while others play.

They were forming a contra-dance in the next room. One of the young ladies belonging to the house, busily pairing off the little people, paused before Katey at last. "Will you have a partner, little girl?"

"I — I don't know," stammered Katey. She did not understand the question; but this might be one of the games of which Jack had told her.

"Can you dance?" The girl spoke impatiently. What a stupid, little old-fashioned child it was, to be sure!

"I don't know," Katey answered with grave consideration; "I never tried."

The girl stared, laughed, and went on.

"I almost think I could," the child continued to herself, leaning out from her corner to watch the dancers. She was growing accustomed to the scene, and now

a desire to participate in it seized upon her. With a glowing, eager face and shining eyes she followed the strange movements, while the music, rising and falling, beat its own time in her heart. There was a little stir, and the crowd about her pressed back; the green pongee fluttered before her eyes, as Delphine, flushed and radiant, chas-s down the room. Her hands were crossed in those of an old-young man, with a bald spot on the top of his head, and a murmur of admiration followed the twinkle of the bespangled slippers. Katey's glance was full of breathless delight; she gloried in Delphine's beauty; she shared her triumph. In her eagerness she did not notice the approach of a set of young fops of her own age who had been watching her for some time from across the room. A sudden pinch, causing her to utter a half-suppressed cry as she grasped her arm, called them first to her notice.

"Hello, granny!" She looked up, her eyes full of the tears the pain had brought, to find a face made horrible by contortions, close to her own. Dacre Home, upon the edge of the group, laughed a cruel, mocking laugh. "O, come on," he said, superciliously; "don't torment the child." There was a spark of feeling somewhere in the boy which had been touched by the child's tears.

"Jimminy, what shoes!" exclaimed another, as they moved away. The little foot had been thrust out in her excitement, displaying the marks of old Crinkle's skill to all beholders. A sob rose in her throat as she hastily drew it under her gown. The pain in her arm stung her still; but it was nothing to the pain that cruel taunt had awakened in her heart.

O, where was Jack! If he would only take her home! Why did she ever come? The glamour was all gone. It was not fairydom any longer, as, shrinking back out of sight, she wiped her eyes stealthily.

Delphine sought her out at last. "What, still here! Why don't you go and play with the others?"

The child had choked back her tears at Delphine's approach. A sensitive pride made her hide her bitter experience. Jack was somewhere happy. Delphine, too, flamed upon her like a star; it was only herself who was miserable; nobody should know; she could bear it for a little time; they would go home presently. "I would rather stay here," she said; "besides, I can see everything."

"Well, you are the oddest little thing," Delphine replied. To her, seeing was but a small part of the evening's pleasure, and conscious of thus having done her duty in looking after Katey, she sailed away again upon the arm of the old-young man,—if one could be said to sail under such scant canvas. But even this little exchange of words created a diversion, and made the child less miserable. Then by leaning forward she discovered that she could hide her shoes with the skirt of her gown. This, too, was a comfort; and her heart grew more light. Then, when the games really began, and one and another saw that she did not join in them, tiny fans and lace-edged handkerchiefs were laid in her lap for safe-keeping, causing a friendly exchange of words, and giving her a kind of silent partnership in them. So her enjoyment, slowly stealing back, reached its culmination, when Jack presently came down the room, very red and swollen in appearance still, as though his jacket were

much too tight for him, but with Josie Durant, the prettiest little lady in the room, hanging upon his arm. Nothing escaped Katey's eyes, from the little white feet shining through the open-worked stockings above the satin slippers, to the yellow hair coiffured in the latest style over the childish face.

"I told your brother that he ought to go and find you," said the little lady, with an authoritative air, which seemed to Katey very droll; "and so, you see, I've brought him." Jack reddened and laughed, looking rather silly, but thoroughly pleased. Yes, Katey saw, and so did all the little lords and ladies, busy with their game, regarding her with new favor; for did not Josie Durant wear real diamond earrings?

"What does he like to do?" the little girl went on, still coquettishly ignoring Jack's name. "He will not play anything."

Jack, twisting a button upon his jacket, and blushing up to his eyes, offered not a word in his own defence. "Let me see," Katey pondered gravely, seized with a violent interest in Jack's favorite pursuits; "he likes to slide down hill."

Jack laughed.

"But you can't slide down hill at parties," the child replied.

"No," assented Katey.

"So I don't know what we shall do with him;" as though Jack must be immediately employed, or, at least, amused. "Please fasten my glove." Jack's red fingers resolved themselves into ten thumbs, each one more clumsy than the others.

"O, let me do it;" and Katey drew the button into place.

"I haven't seen you before to-night," said Miss Josie, while this operation was going on. With instinctive politeness, which is only kindness, after all, the little girl tried to keep her eyes from the flowered gown. "Seems to me you haven't been around much."

"No-o," Katey replied, slowly, giving a final pat to the little wrist before releasing it, "I haven't, much."

She could not mortify Jack before Miss Josie by confessing that she had sat upon that blessed ottoman in the corner ever since the party began. Instinctively she guarded the honor of the family.

"Well, we must go," said the kind little tyrant, presently, turning Jack around. "Perhaps we'll come again. I forgot to ask if you were having a good time," she threw over her shoulder.

"Beautiful," Katey responded, warmly. There was no doubt upon the subject in her mind, as they disappeared, the tiny gloved hand still resting upon the sleeve of Jack's outgrown jacket. "And then there's the supper," thought the child, who was weighing and measuring her joys as only they do to whom joys are few and rare.

The music startled the little people in the midst of their game. It was a march now, and a long procession began to form. All the little fans and handkerchiefs were caught from Katey's lap, as their owners hastened to place themselves in the line. The young lady who had offered her a partner for the first dance was arranging the little masters and misses in couples. Katey, in her corner, was quite overlooked. Perhaps Jack would come, she thought, anxiously scanning the jackets dancing about before her eyes. Once in the

distance she caught a glimpse of the green pongee. Delphine was a young lady, and between her and Katey, by reason of years, was a great gulf fixed; but Jack!—it was not like Jack to forget. The procession moved out of the room. Katey's heart swelled with grief, which changed to anger against the little lady who had satin slippers, real diamond earrings, and — Jack. A tear had fallen into her lap upon the poor despised roses, where it shone for a moment like dew. But as her anger rose the tears dried away. "Jack ought not to do so," she said aloud, in a strange, excited tone. She was alone; the last couple had passed out; the music sounded faint in the distance. She started up with a sudden purpose. "I'll go home." She darted out into the hall, at the farther end of which was the supper-room. Between the parted forms gathered about the door she caught a momentary glimpse of the glories beyond. Merry, shrill voices came out to her with the sweet strains of the music. A confusion of bright, happy faces, of fairy forms, danced before her eyes — a paradise from which she was shut out; and O, dreadful to see, there was Jack — her Jack — with no care or anxiety upon his face, bashful, but triumphant, with Josie Durant at his side. He held her plate; one of her dainty gloves peeped out of his pocket. Katey marked it all, as she stood for a moment with parted lips, flushed cheeks, and little dark hands clinched tight. A pale-faced boy, sitting upon the stairs with a crutch lying beside him, leaned over to watch the queer little figure. What could be the matter with the child, as, suddenly turning, she darted up the stairs, falling over the crutch in her haste!

"One moment, please." He caught at the brocade gown to save her. "I believe I shall have to trouble you for my crutch." It had slid to the foot of the stairs.

"O," said Katey, recovering herself, and diverted for the moment from her purpose, "I must have struck it; but you see I'm in a hurry," as she ran down to recover it.

"Yes, I should think so." What an odd little creature it was, to be sure, in the queer, old-fashioned gown, and with a mass of dark hair tossed by her fall about her face! "But won't you sit down a moment? It is rather lonely here all by one's self."

Katey had given him a hurried inspection. He was years older than Jack, but not so handsome, though his clothes were finer, and not at all outgrown. Poor Katey had become observant in such matters. Then he really desired her to sit by him. That was being almost like the other girls in pretty gowns down stairs; and her queer little heart grew light again. "I believe I will," she said, perching herself primly upon the stair above him. "But you should not stay here," she went on, as visions of the glories below floated before her mind; "you won't get any supper."

"O, yes, I will; they told me to remain here out of the crowd until they sent one of the waiters to me."

Katey had not the least conception as to whom "they" referred; but she had become somewhat embittered by her late experience, and inclined to doubt everybody. "Perhaps they'll forget you," she suggested, secretly wiping away a tear with the corner of a very large embroidered handkerchief.

"O, no; they won't do that, I am sure."

"I don't know," persisted Katey, sorrowfully, "*they forgot me.*"

"I'm glad of it," the boy replied. So that was the trouble, he thought. "I am not really glad, of course, and I don't see how it could have happened," he added, diplomatically; "but how fortunate for me! I should have had to sit here alone."

Katey made no reply to the words so full of kindly tact. She seemed lost in thought. The little hands were clasped tight over the great roses blossoming upon the diminutive knees. The wide forehead under the dark tangles which had fallen over it was drawn by two horizontal lines where the eyes came together in consultation. "How should you like," she began again, presently, "to have your brother go off with another girl?"

The boy was rather abashed by the suddenness, not to say the strangeness, of the proposition. "Well," he replied, slowly, "if she was a very nice girl —"

"With real diamond earrings," interpolated Katey, not losing sight of the honor conferred upon the family.

"Yes," assented the boy, gravely. Katey's great eyes were upon him, and he dared not smile; "and open-work stockings," she continued.

"Yes," he went on, "and with open-work stockings, by all means; a very nice girl," he ventured.

"Yes," said Katey, warming to the subject, "not a bit ashamed to speak to anybody in a corner."

"O, no, not at all," repeated the boy. "Why, I think I should like it very well."

"So do I," exclaimed Katey, now thoroughly aroused to the advantages of the situation, and veering entirely around. "I think it is beautiful."

"Here it is now;" and her new friend leaned down to receive a plate loaded with strange delicacies. "Pomp!" he called after the waiter, who was an awful personage in Katey's eyes, "another plate, and sharp, now."

He piled the lion's share into her lap, until the child laughed aloud in her delight. It was not for the cakes and candies; she was too happy to eat; but it was so delightful to be waited upon; to be almost like the little girls down stairs! "Jack said the supper would be best of all; and—there he is now!" as a boy suddenly appeared, darting in and out of the parlors, and thrusting his head into the corners, as though searching for some one. "Jack!" she called, nearly overturning her plate as she started from her seat.

"What are you doing up there?" Jack responded, rather crossly, as, heated and breathless, he discovered her at last. "O," in a milder tone, as he caught sight of her companion, "I thought you were alone."

"No," replied Katey, "I am not alone at all. There is a very nice boy here; 'most as nice as you, but not so handsome," she added, in a whisper, speaking through the stair rails.

The very nice boy laughed, and appeared a little embarrassed by this frank speech, which somewhat mollified Jack. "I'll take care of your sister," he said; "you can find her here after supper."

"Yes," added Katey, sitting down again to her nuts and raisins. "You can go back, Jack; I don't care anything at all about it now." What it was about which Katey had ceased to care, Jack did not pause to inquire, but, thus relieved from all responsibility, hastened away again.

An hour later, when, hooded and cloaked, the children trooped down the stairs to go home, in the moment of waiting Katey found herself once more by the side of her new acquaintance. He stood leaning upon his crutch, looking pale and tired. "You'd better go and sit down," she said, in a motherly tone, which greatly amused the boy.

"I must stand sometimes for a change," he replied; "you see I can't run about as you do."

"I don't care to run about," said Katey, with an ill-defined attempt at consolation. "Still," she added, with grave truthfulness, "I suppose I should care to if I couldn't. Then Delphine's hand drew her away.

"Why did you do so?" Katey said, when the door had closed after them, and they were out in the dark, still night. "Why did you pull me away? I wanted to say good-night to him."

"Who is he?" Delphine asked, in reply; for Delphine, with all her gayety, had a high regard for the proprieties, and looked with distrust upon this sudden friendliness.

"I don't know; but he is a very nice boy."

"But what is his name?" persisted Delphine. "Of course some one introduced you."

"No, they didn't; but he is a very nice boy."

"Boy!" repeated Delphine; "he is as old as I, and I should not have thought, Katey, that you would be so familiar with a stranger."

Poor Katey, darting before the others in sudden anger, feeling dimly that the reproof was unjust, answered only with a little burst of sobs, as she ran up the steps of the ghostly old house. But the tears soon dried away; it was only a patter of great drops

after that little hot flash. It had been a beautiful time, after all, she thought, creeping up the wide stairs in the darkness to where Chloe sat over the fire in Delphine's room, half asleep, waiting to undress them.

"Dere warn't nuffin so fine as dis yere, I'll be boun'," she said, fumbling with dusky fingers over the fastenings of the brocade gown, as the fire-light made all the roses bloom again.

"There was certainly nothing at all like it," laughed Delphine, shaking down her long, rippling hair.

CHAPTER III.

HAPPY DAYS.

AMONG the most vivid recollections in after years of Katey's early life were those associated with the great brick school-house at the West End, where so many hours of each endless day were passed—the paved yard in which the girls, old and young, walked solemnly at recess under the eye of the monitor; the long, dimly-lighted alley at one side of the gate, where they promenaded in stormy weather, whispering “secrets” which might have been shouted upon the house-top; the wide plank walk over the way, upon the side street, worn into grooves by little feet, where games which possibly still rule and reign among little folks were played at noon time. The great trees in the hospital yard leaned over and stretched out their arms here to the passers, bestowing a benediction and blessing of pleasant shade upon the children. Thick with leaves were the branches and white with dust in the summer time. Do other children play there now?

Beyond were the great gates giving entrance to the hospital grounds, with the porter's lodge, like a sentry-box just inside. Katey used to dart past it, half fearful of recall, on Saturday afternoons, when she had permission to come here and spend an hour or two

with her old nurse, Elsie Bird, who had charge now of the queer, round laundry-house, with its odd, steamy odors, and many delightful mysteries. Upon a bit of carpet laid over the brick floor where she stood before the table encircling the ironing-room, Elsie was always found, surrounded by her satellites — pleasant-faced Irish girls, who never failed to have a word of welcome for the child. A tall, gaunt woman, of muscular build, was Elsie, but with voice and ways strangely shy and gentle. She made these visits high holidays to Katey. A tiny polishing iron and long rolls of linen bandages always awaited the child, who played at ironing; and when these failed to amuse, her hand held fast in Elsie's, she strayed through the long, bewildering corridors, up the wide stairs, and into the strange stillness of the regions where the sick, and sore, and hurt lay in their white beds. Never like human creatures did these sufferers appear to her. Mysterious beings they were, unlike any who walked the streets outside, with their great glassy eyes following her as she passed fearfully over the bare floor. Sometimes they paused in the dissecting-room, where the vacant seats rose to the ceiling, and in the midst of which was the table where the sufferers lay down to be healed by the knife. The nurses, meeting Elsie, would recount some fearful tale of disease, or pain, or death; Katey, horror-stricken but fascinated, listening the while. Or, to please her, as they thought, they showed the skeleton in his case, — a ghastly sight, which haunted her afterwards at night, — and the shrivelled, blackened mummy, with the scarab which had been worshipped thousands of years before fastened to its nose. Are they there still?

One afternoon, as she bent over her ironing-table improvised from a chair, she was conscious of a sudden hush throughout the queer high room. Looking up from her little round-edged iron, she saw a group of gentlemen just within the door. The pleasant-faced superintendent often came here. Katey had seen him many times. He beckoned to her now, as Elsie left her work, and the girls, struck with strange awe, made continual obeisance, bowing to the floor, yet not for him. "This is Father Mathew," said he, kindly, as the child with her little hot, red face stood before him, the roll of linen tangled about her feet. She noticed then that some of the party wore long, straight coats, like that of the old priest who went up and down Poplar Street sometimes ; and at these words, one, in advance of the others, who had been speaking to Elsie, took her little hand, still hot from the iron, in his, with a murmur of kind words. Long afterwards she remembered the hand-clasp and the gentle tones of his voice, when all recollection of the face or figure of the Irish reformer had faded from her mind.

Then what delight it was, when the day drew near its end, still clinging to Elsie's gown, to follow her to the low room where the supper table was spread out, with great stone pitchers of milk, and high, neatly arranged piles of brown and white bread ; and last of all, to gather with the household in the great wainscoted hall for prayers. The summer twilight stole in at the open windows with the rustle of the leaves outside. The noise of the city had died away to a murmur pleasant to the ear. Katey, kneeling upon the bare floor, saw the white faces of the sick, who had crept down, glorified by the last rays of the sun ; and taking

in none of the rolling words of the prayer, had yet an awful consciousness that God came very near.

The afternoon following the party the girls trooped out at the door of the high brick school-house, the constrained voices breaking into call and shout as the final bounds were passed and they separated to go their several ways. Katey, in a little red hood, and an old brown sack, rather pinched about the arms, but of a material which had been fine in its day, came slowly up the street among the last with Josie Durant. Her progress was somewhat impeded by the very large overshoes upon her feet, which had belonged originally to Delphine, and would yawn at the sides as though they laughed at every step she made, to say nothing of catching at the toes against projections so far beyond the little feet as to be out of all calculation.

There was a row of English-basement houses, comfortable and even handsome, along the street, in the front window of each of which, shining with silver and glass, a tea table was set out. It was a daily source of enjoyment to Katey to speculate upon the delicacies which would doubtless appear when the shades were drawn, the gas lighted, and the families assembled. Though not alone, she did not forget it now. "Mince pie and ice-cream, — yes, and jujube-paste;" she was settling this rather unwholesome bill of fare in her mind when some one ran hastily by and up the high stone steps to the house. It was little Annie Conway, whose seat was across the aisle from her own at school.

"Is that you, Katey Earle? I'm going up to the Common to coast. Why don't you go?"

The wind blew an icy blast down the street; the

bank of cloud behind the hospital was already flaming red in the sunset. "I don't know," Katey replied, slowly; "I believe I'll ask mother. You'll come, too, Josie?"

But the little lady was undecided. "There'll be a crowd of boys," uttering the word *boys* as though it had been mosquitos, or any other swarming plague.

"But we might find Jack. He would take care of us."

"Who is Jack?" queried the little girl, swinging from the door-knob above them.

"Don't you know Jack?" exclaimed Katey, too much astonished at her benighted condition to attempt an explanation.

"He's Katey's brother," said Josie, while a soft little blush, the shade of the pretty pink hood upon her head, stole into her cheeks.

"O," the little girl replied, carelessly; adding, with the unpleasant frankness of childhood, "it's that freckled boy."

"No, it isn't," denied Katey, planting Delphine's overshoes like a battery before the steps, prepared for a siege of any length in Jack's behalf.

"Come, Katey," whispered Josie, persuasively, pulling at her sleeve as the child shouted back, "'Tis too; I saw him last night at the party; and he's awful bashful."

This was altogether too much to bear without commencing hostilities. Before the words fairly reached her, Katey had seized a handful of snow and discharged it at the child. But as she aimed with the accuracy peculiar to the sex even in a youthful stage, it only flew a short distance in the air above her, to descend,

like curses, in a shower upon her own head, as the door closed hastily after the retreating little figure.

"Don't mind it," said Josie, in a conciliatory tone, which, however, only exasperated Katey. "She didn't mean anything; and then you know your brother is — that is, he has —"

Katey faced her with a terrible countenance, in which surprise and pain waged a warfare with indignation. "You've took sides with her!" she gasped, her grammar flying to the winds. "I'll just go home and tell Jack!"

"You can if you wish to," returned Josie, her face growing white. "But I didn't think you were such a girl as that; and—and I haven't taken sides at all." The color had returned to her face, but there was a sob in her throat as she walked on alone.

Poor Katey, whose fitful moods were no less surprising to herself than to others, shuffled along the street very sorry and penitent, the anger having died down in her heart as quickly as it rose. And what would Jack say? An awful burden of remorse fell upon her with that thought.

They had turned the corner, and were approaching the old brick church, where their ways separated. Katey moved the overshoes at a quicker pace until she gained Josie's side. "Are—are you going up to the Common?" she ventured, in a very weak voice.

"I don't suppose you want me to go," Josie replied, staring straight before her, the tears still wet on her cheeks.

Katey saw her advantage. There is nothing like taking high ground and assuming to be the injured party in a quarrel. "Now if you are cross just because I said that —" she began.

"I am not cross." The tables were suddenly turned, as little Miss Josie found to her bewilderment.

"Aren't you!" Katey exclaimed in a happy voice. A great load was lifted from her. "Then I'll run home and ask mother." Her heart was much lighter than her feet as she started off down the street upon a shuffling run.

"Katey!" called Josie; and when she returned, "You're not going to tell Jack?"

"O, no, indeed;" as though such a thought had never entered her mind. "Besides, it might hurt his feelings," she added in a low tone, confidentially, "for you know he is awful freckled."

Half an hour later they moved slowly up the long walk of the Common. Night was beginning to steal over the city. Lights shone in the windows along the street, and twinkled among the trees in the distance like blinking eyes. A keen north wind rattled the frozen branches overhead, sending more than one shower of icicles upon the little heads. "I wish we hadn't come," sighed Katey. "I don't see where Jack can be.—There he is now, I believe," as a sturdy little figure, very much muffled up about the ears, and dragging a sled after him, came down one of the cross paths from the long slide where the coasters flew over the hill like black balls in the twilight.

"Holloa—what are you here for?" was Jack's rather discouraging greeting, as he caught sight of the little red hood.

"We wanted to slide," Katey replied, humbly; then she stepped forward, revealing Josie, who was staring with a very prim, absorbed air at the lamp-post close by.

"O!" and Jack removed the lion's skin at once, and became awkward and meek as a lamb.

"It's too late to slide, but I might draw one of you home," he suggested, bashfully.

There was a momentary dispute between the little girls. "You." "No, *you*." But at last Josie's bright-colored skirts were tucked about the little feet upon the old sled, and the small procession started homeward. They were passing one of the crowded entrances to the Common, on their way up the hill, when Katey darted away, dropping one of the overshoes in her haste. She had espied a tall boy leaning upon a crutch, and recognized in him her friend of the night before. But when she stood, an odd little figure, just before him, seized with shyness, she had not a word to say.

"Why, how do you do?" exclaimed the boy, cordially.

"O, I am well," replied Katey, who recognized no spiritual significance in the greeting, but a literal desire to know of her health. "Here is Jack, and *her*," she added, in a loud whisper, as Jack and Josie came up.

"*Her*?" repeated the boy, inquiringly. "O, yes; the very nice little girl. I understand."

"What do you mean, Katey Earle," exclaimed Jack, "by running off in that way?" Poor Jack had recovered the overshoe with some difficulty, and was rather cross and breathless with his efforts in overtaking its owner.

"I don't mean anything," Katey replied, simply. "I only came here to see this boy."

The boy smiled and touched his cap to Miss Josie,

who made a prim little bow from her temporary throne. "I saw you last evening, I think."

"O, yes," said Jack. "You're the fellow who was sitting on the stairs. I should think it would be awful dull—" he went on, fixing his eyes upon the crutch; then he stopped. But the boy took up his words. "It is dull enough," he said; "but I hope it is only for a little while. I fell on the ice a month ago, and have been laid up ever since. I am just getting about again."

"O!" said Katey, immensely relieved, and yet upon second thought rather disappointed that her hero should be much like other boys, after all. "Then you don't mean to go on crutches always?"

"I don't mean to, certainly," replied the boy, who seemed a little embarrassed by all this conversation about himself. "Are you having a pleasant time?" he asked Katey, suddenly; "I have been watching the coasters."

"O, yes," replied Katey, whose little face was quite blue, and who stood with the unprotected foot deep in the snow; "beautiful!"

"But where is your sled?"

"I use Jack's; that is, when he'll let me," she added, with a truthfulness which did not tend to conciliate Jack.

The boy seemed to consider a moment, as they stood just within the iron posts, pushed and jostled by the passers hurrying in and out.

Jack moved impatiently. "Come, Katey."

"I'm going home now," said her friend; "perhaps you will let me walk up Park Street with you; I live there." And he pointed to the block of houses just

beyond the church. They moved on, Katey trying to accommodate her short steps to the uneven ones by her side. "I thought I should see you again," said the boy. "Sometimes you are sure of things, you know, even when you can't tell why."

Katey made no reply. She did not understand at all what he was saying; she was watching the queer little shadows dancing upon the snow under the gas-light, her ears full of the sound of tinkling bells. "But when I say good night now," he added, "I can't feel sure again, because I am going away."

"But you'll come back again; people always come back." This had been Katey's experience.

"O, yes, some time, perhaps. But here we are now. Wait a moment," he added, hurriedly; "or come in."

"O, no," Katey replied, moving back, yet gazing in at the open door, with its revelation of bright light, soft colors, and of an airy, beautiful figure with outspread wings, in a niche above the stairs, ready, it seemed to the child, to float down upon them.

"Do come in a moment."

"No," Katey replied, coming back to realities; "mother does not allow us to go into people's houses without knowing who they are."

"That's polite," whispered Jack. But fortunately the boy had disappeared at the first word.

"What can he want us to wait for?" interposed Josie, anxious for peace.

"Perhaps he is going to bring us some ice-cream," suggested Katey, whose imagination knew no bounds.

"I hope not," laughed Josie, wrapping her benumbed little hands in her cloak.

But before Katey had time for any further sugges-

tions, her friend appeared with a handsome sled in his arms. Jack's in its brightest days could never have been like this.

"I want to give it to you," he said to Katey. "I shall never use it again; besides, I am going away." He spoke in haste, as though she might interrupt him; but she only stared, standing motionless, the dark eyes opened to their fullest extent.

Jack pulled her sleeve. "Why don't you say something?"

"O, my!" gasped Katey, thus reminded of proprieties.

"Why don't you thank him?" and again Jack caught her sleeve.

"Jack," Katey exclaimed, finding her voice at last, "she never will let me take it, I know. Don't you remember the turtle?"

Then followed some whispered reminiscences, which the boy pretended not to notice.

"You see," Katey said, turning to him after a moment, "you might get well, and want it yourself."

"I am too old to use it now."

"But you might sell it," suggested the child, who had lived in the midst of the strictest calculations as to ways and means. "I should think," she added, with grave deliberation, dropping her head upon one side, as she had seen Chloe do, "I should think you might get as much as twenty-five cents for it."

Jack laughed outright; but her friend answered in all seriousness, "I don't care to sell it. I have made up my mind to give it away — perhaps to a little girl I know who has two already," he added, carelessly.

"O, no!"

The boy smiled, deepening the light in the gray eyes hid under a rather heavy brow. "Then perhaps you will take it."

Katey looked at Jack, who was her moral thermometer. "Mother won't care," he said; "I'll tell her all about it."

"Will you? O, you are the goodest Jack!" exclaimed the child, in a burst of gratitude and delight. "You see," she explained to the boy, "mother never allows us to take anything from people we don't —" know anything about, she was going to say; but here Jack gave the little sleeve a twitch, abruptly ending the sentence.

"What are you pulling me for, Jack?" she said, gravely; "you know it is so."

But Jack had uttered a brief "good night," and was already moving down the street. Katey took the sled in her arms. "I suppose I shan't see you again," said the boy, as she deposited it upon the snow, and arranged the rope to her satisfaction. "I shall be off so soon now."

"Will you? Well, good by!" and Katey turned back to offer him one of the little cold hands; "you must take care of yourself," she added, primly. It was always her mother's parting injunction, and seemed to the child particularly appropriate now.

"I'll try to, certainly," replied her friend, laughing, as the queer little figure ran off down the street, disappearing at last in the darkness.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BEGINNING OF THE END.

THIS winter, of which we recount such trivial events, was a memorable one in Boston. The fugitive slave law had just been passed, shaking the city—as well as the whole nation—to its foundations. A few fearless men dared to denounce the act. They were hissed and hooted at in the street; they were threatened with fire and sword; they were assailed in their own houses, and barely escaped with their lives. From a refuge, Boston became a covert, where frightened creatures hid in trembling insecurity. Then came the day when one was unearthed; was seized, and chained, and marched down through the streets in the centre of a squad of police, headed and followed by the militia.

Hot excitement, bursting out at times, smouldered throughout the length and breadth of the quiet city. Men and women looked on with flaming eyes and white lips. Even the children, who are but convex mirrors reflecting their elders in miniature, took it up. The line which always divides human interests and sympathies and warm hearts strengthened into a chain in those days—broken a dozen years later; but O, the breaking!

Katey listened one day with clinched hands and

bated breath to the story as told by a little curly-headed girl to a group of awe-struck children huddled together outside the gate at the close of school — of how her father was one of the Lancers called out to guard this human chattel on its way back to slavery; how, like a man, he rebelled in his heart, and said he would not go; and how — like a man, too, alas! — he arrayed himself at last in the gay uniform, walked out of the house in his clanking spurs, mounted his horse, and rode away with the rest. Katey despised him in her heart at that moment. Perhaps, years after, looking back, — if she remembered, — she saw that more than one man hesitated and yielded at that time and later, not from cowardice, but from an honest query in his mind, in rendering up his dues, as to which were Cæsar's and which God's. We see through different eyes.

"He had to go," said the child, closing her story.

"Why did he have to?" dared Katey.

"You don't know anything about it, Katey Earle." The child felt that a party had risen against her, though only one had spoken aloud. "When you belong to things you have to go."

A hush followed these convincing words. Katey's flashing eyes, staring at the narrator, only burned with a fiercer fire. "*I'd stop belonging*," she said, pushing her way out of the group, and flying off down the street, the rain and the hot tears wet on her face.

When she entered the house, she found, besides her mother and Delphine, a visitor who had never ventured into the parlor before. It was an old colored woman, known as "Mammy," who for many years had been a pensioner upon Madam Earle's slender bounty;

for, though so reduced in circumstances, the family had not yet denied itself the luxury of charity.

Mammy had been a slave, in her younger days, upon a Virginia plantation; but that was at a time so far distant as to seem almost a dream.

"How old are you, Mammy?" Delphine had asked once.

"I don't no, missy," was the reply. "But my Jake wor ten year, when ole mar'sr say he's gwine up ter town for t' see Mar'sr Washington made president."

"And did you go?"

"O, no, chile;" and Mammy shook her head sadly. "De gran' folks went, wi' de hosses an' de kerriges. We on'y blacked de boots what went."

Whether she had ever purchased her freedom, or had ever, indeed, except by possession, won a lawful right to herself, no one knew. Certainly she seemed to feel no fear now, when others trembled. Her husband had died in slavery. The only son left to her from a large family had escaped to the North, and afterwards purchased his freedom and that of his family. But the bleak New England climate had swept away one after another, the father himself at last, leaving only one grandchild to Mammy. This girl had married a runaway slave from Georgia, an idle, improvident fellow, who, as years went on and a dusky family gathered about him, succeeded only in keeping a roof over their heads, — and a leaky one at that, — by putting forth what were to him superhuman exertions. He sawed wood occasionally — so occasionally that wood-sawing could hardly be termed his profession; he went upon errands, but at such a pace that the most hopeful heart despaired of their accomplish-

ment; and he cleared the sidewalks in winter before two or three houses, where he was borne with for the sake of poor old Mammy, upon whom really devolved the support of the helpless family. Accumulated misfortunes, which fall regardless of color, — among which lazy Ben reckoned his growing family and the “sca’ceness” of work, — had brought sickness to his wife — that fatal New England malady which seems the very grinding of the eternal mills, so slow it is, but so exceeding sure in its result.

In summer’s heat or winter’s cold, then, Mammy travelled from house to house among her patrons, sure of a welcome and something to keep the wolf from their shaky door, to fill the hungry mouths and cover the little dusky backs which were hung over the rickety fence in the summer sunshine or shivered about the broken stove in winter. She was a marked figure; unusually tall, exceeding the stature of most men, and extremely aged though she was, straight as a grenadier. Her dress, neat as scant, was always of some dingy black material, and sufficiently short to display the men’s boots in which her feet were encased, years though it was before the introduction of short dresses into polite society. Bound about her head was a plaid cotton handkerchief in the form of a turban, and perched upon the apex of this, a diminutive Quaker bonnet, tilted at an angle which no Quaker bonnet before or since ever attempted, but which was after a time exchanged in winter for a warm black hood, over the construction of which Katey’s fingers shed tears of blood.

She dragged after her always a little wooden cart, such as children use in play. It had more than its

due proportion of rattle, and thereby effectually announced her approach. A certain regularity marked the time of her visits: which might have been computed, not directly, but as sure to follow other events — much, in fact, as one reckons the approach of Lent, only that in Mammy's case Ben's variations, rather than the moon's, were to be taken into consideration; and however it might have been at other houses, a cordial welcome and a cup of tea always awaited her at Madam Earle's, with a chair close by the kitchen fire.

She never begged. Why should she? Her friends knew her sore need. But she received the parcel of clothes or food, or both, made up in anticipation of her coming, with fervent thanks and blessings — blessings upon the donor, but thanks only to the Lord, who held the fullness of the earth in his hand, and from whom came every gift. Indeed, his name was seldom absent from her lips, and it seemed almost as though her poor body had been forgotten here, while her spirit had taken up its abode already in heavenly habitations.

Her manners were quaint, and belonged to a past generation. She rapped at the door, then entered without waiting for a response, advancing in a series of exceedingly low courtesies or dips executed with the utmost rigidity — partly, no doubt, from old-fashioned precision, and quite as much, perhaps, from the rheumatism, with which she was afflicted. This salutation, performed as it was with all the solemnity of a religious observance and in the extremely short gown, excited Delphine's scarcely concealed smiles; but to Katey, who gazed upon it from a safe distance, it brought only delightful visions of that old Virginia

home of which Mammy spoke sometimes — of the gay gallants and beautiful ladies from whom these obsolete “manners” had been copied. And when, upon going away, she worked herself out of the room by a series of backward courtesies still more surprising, it was like nothing less than a presentation at court! Still, the grave doubt as to results which necessarily attend all backward movements, marred the full enjoyment of this scene, and the child always experienced a sensation of relief when the door closed at last upon the tall form.

As Katey crept into the warm, bright room, dazzled by the light after the darkness outside, this strange figure rose from where it had been sitting upon the edge of one of the high-backed chairs, and dropped a couple of respectful courtesies in silence.

“This is bad, very bad,” Madam Earle was saying. “You think, then, they are looking for him?”

The little red hands stretched out before the fire fell into Katey’s lap as she turned to listen.

“Yes, missis; Ben seen his ole mars’r for shore dis mornin’;” and Mammy polished with an old colored handkerchief one dusky cheek, upon which a tear had fallen.

“Where is Ben?”

“I don’no; but he’ll be aroun’ home soon, I s’pect. De Lor’ hab mercy on his ’flicted people!” she added, with a groan, swaying her body back and forth as though in pain.

“What is he going to do?”

“I don’no, missis, I don’no. O Lor’, mighty ter sabe, come down an’ help dis yere poor chile!” she muttered, still swaying upon her chair.

"Of course he will try to hide," Madam Earle went on.

"Whar'll he hide?" returned Mammy. "De very groun' gib up de dead, dese days."

"Or slip away and escape to Canada," pursued Madam Earle, thoughtfully.

Mammy ceased to wipe her eyes. "Pears like he might try;" then despair seized upon her. "But — O Lor'! Phar'oh's hos' follow close behin'."

Delphine, from her corner, had been listening breathlessly to this conversation. She started up now, hot and angry. "I wish I were a man!"

"Hush, Delphine," said her mother, in a low voice.

But Mammy had caught the words. She paused in her wailing. "Wha' for you wish you wor a man for, missy?" Her figure stretched itself suddenly upright; the old black hood fell from her head; she raised her long, skinny finger. "Hark! hear de swif' feet dat run; hear de bayin' ob the houn's; hear de wailin' ob de women; hear de chil'n cry; dat ar's *man's* work, missy."

"O mother, mother! can't you do anything?" sobbed Delphine, while Katey sat white and speechless, shivering with excitement.

Was it chance made the mother at that moment raise her eyes to the portrait hanging in its tarnished frame over the fireplace? It was the portrait of her grandfather, who had been a mighty man in the colonies before they rebelled. Later, he sacrificed friends, property, and almost life itself, in the cause of his king. He went down to his grave, at last, poor, despised, covered with obloquy, for having maintained, through evil as well as good report, his fidelity to the powers

which he honestly believed should govern the land. There was something in the stern, straight-forward glance of the eyes from under the overhanging brows of the old Tory, something in the squareness of the lower part of the face, which had come down to and set their mark upon the softer countenance of the woman. She turned to Delphine.

"My dear," she said, "the law may often seem unjust; it may entail sorrow and suffering upon the few: but it is for the many, and it must be maintained. We are forbidden to harbor or assist the fugitives; but we can help Mammy. We can do no more." She drew Delphine down and kissed her. "Now run away to bed, you and Katey. I must see what can be done."

But this did not satisfy warm-hearted, impulsive Delphine. She caught Mammy's two hands in her own as the tall figure rose from its seat. "O, if I only *could* do something!" she said. Shiftless Ben had suddenly become an object worthy of any sacrifice.

"Bress ye, bress ye, chile," Mammy responded; but her tears fell. Her heart had grown heavy under Madam Earle's words. Katey stole out of the room with a shy little bow in response to Mammy's dejected courtesy. She was pondering all this in her heart.

There was a deep silence for a few moments after their departure, broken only by Mammy's ejaculations under her breath. Then Madam Earle spoke. "It must be very hard for you now that Ben can do nothing. What are you most in need of?"

"Delibberance," groaned Mammy. "Delibberance from dis yere wicked worl'!"

Madam Earle made no response to this reply; she

only leaned thoughtfully upon her hand for a moment, then, bending forward, pulled the faded bell-cord hanging by the fireplace.

The door opened, and Chloe's dusky face appeared. "Go to the attic, Chloe, and bring me that old camlet cloak you will find hanging there." Chloe disappeared. "You have not come to me for advice, Mammy," Madam Earle went on, when the door had closed after the girl. "You know, of course, that Ben must get away as soon as possible — this very night if he can."

"I done come for nuffin, missis," returned Mammy, who was entirely disheartened in her attempt to secure human aid. "I done come for nuffin, an' I 'spects I'm not gwine to be dis'pinted. O Lor'!" she murmured, "soften de hard hearts!"

"Yes, that is it," for Chloe had entered the room again, bearing the cloak on her arm. "Now cut some slices of bread and the ham which was left from dinner as quickly as possible, and don't be sparing of either. Wrap them in a stout paper, and bring them to me."

She crossed the room to the old mahogany escritoire in one corner, and, opening it, took out a roll of bank bills. It was by no means large, and she uttered a sigh as she turned it over, carefully selecting one. Then drawing a chair, she took up a pen, hesitating a moment before beginning to write, and smiling to herself when the pen ran swiftly over the paper. "There, Mammy," she said, as she put the money into the old woman's hands. "I cannot give you more now, and the cloak is faded, I know, but it is warm, and, worn well about the face, would hide one's countenance."

"Bress ye, honey," responded Mammy, but without

emotion. It was not for money nor clothes she had come, and she failed to catch the significance of Madam Earle's last words. "Tank de Lor' for his gifts," she added, piously.

"And I have written a note," Madam Earle went on, an odd smile upon her face. "I want Ben to deliver it for me, and to-night if he can." Still she smiled strangely. "Wait; I will read it." She opened the paper upon which she had just written a few lines, and read, —

"Will Jason Miles please send the apples engaged of him without further delay ?

And oblige

MARSYLVA EARLE.'

You know Jason Miles?"

But Mammy, holding the old cloak across her knees rocked slowly back and forth, shaking her head. What were Jason Miles and his apples to her at such a time as this? She was disappointed and grieved. She had asked for bread, and received a stone.

But still Madam Earle persisted: "You must know him, Mammy; he is the good old Quaker out upon the Dorchester turnpike who is said to have helped so many slaves on to Canada."

Mammy fell in a grotesque heap at her feet as the light broke upon her at last. "O Lor'," she prayed, laughing and crying in a breath, "how I'se doubted ye! how I'se said wha' for de chariot so long a comin' for? — when it's jes' here, jes' here dis minit. O Lor'! Look at dat now; not let de lef' han' know what de right han' doin';" and she chuckled and laughed, upon her knees though she was. "Bress dis ere

chile, and make her to shine like de stars in glory. O Lor' —" But Madam Earle checked her, as Chloe's step was heard approaching. She assisted her to her feet, and, finally, with her own hands, let her out at the door, not daring to trust her to Chloe, whose zeal in the cause would have more than equalled her discretion. Mammy continued to utter her prayer, however, and to call down blessings upon the family, as she passed through the hall, in a series of wonderful courtesies extending even to the front gate.

CHAPTER V.

KATEY ACTS THE PART OF A DELIVERER.

KATEY awoke the next morning with a weight upon her spirits. Something had happened. What was it? Gradually, as the light struggled in between the heavy, half-closed shutters, the scene of the evening before returned to her mind. Where was Ben? Had they found him? Had they caught him? She sprang out of bed, and began to dress hurriedly; but soon her excitement and anxiety died away. She had reasoned it out in her odd little mind. Things happened, dreadful things; but always to people ever so far off, whom one did not know. Nothing could have harmed Ben. He was a part of the prosaic every-day life which held no elements of tragedy. So all her fears faded away, and happier thoughts took their place. She would hasten down and try the new sled, about which she had as yet found no opportunity to speak to her mother. Jack had descended half an hour before, sounding a reveillé upon her door as he passed. The winter sun had not yet dispelled the shadows which filled the dim old hall and dusky stairway as she ran after him. Chloe's ringing voice, with its odd intonation, came from some distant region in a wailing song:—

“I carn’ stay behin’, O Lor’:
I carn’ stay behin’.”

Katey had heard it often before, and the words followed the chant through her head as she tied on the little red hood and ran out at the door, shutting it heavily after her. Jack should be just outside. But she peered into the darkness in vain. Slowly the chill, heavy shadows were lifting as she went on up the street. She turned the corner, and the grim form of the old brick church rose like a huge misshapen figure before her, every angle and recess filled with mysterious darkness. Suddenly, close down at its base, where the sharp walls jutted out, the shadows appeared to move — to gather themselves into a figure. Katey stood still and gazed at it fearfully. The houses the length of the street were silent and dark, the street lamps still burned, but with a faint yellow light. Away in the distance the old city awoke, and turned itself with a sleepy sigh. But here no sound broke the stillness, not even a passing foot awoke the echoes. While she stared, undecided whether to fly past and go on in pursuit of Jack, or retrace her steps, a crouching figure shambled out of the darkness, and approached her. It was wrapped in an old cloak, and turned its head from side to side, as if to listen, as it drew near.

“ O Lor’, Missy Kate, dat you ? ”

“ Why, Ben ! ” ejaculated Katey, her heart giving a great leap, and almost escaping from her parted lips. So it was true, after all, and the dreadful things which happened to people a long way off, had for once really come near.

“ Yes, missy ; dat me, for shore,” Ben replied, in a tone which seemed to imply that he wished it had been almost any one else at this moment.

"O, why don't you run, then," cried Katey, all her fears awakened for the sorry figure before her.

"Whar' ever'll I run to, missy, now, in de daylight?" whined Ben. And even as he spoke the darkness seemed to vanish from around them. Katey could distinguish forms far down the street, and, to her terror, steps drew near. "O Lor', Missy Kate! what'll I do? Don' le' um gi' me;" and shaking with terror, Ben retreated to his hiding-place again. The steps drew near and passed by. It was only some laborer, with shovel and pick over his shoulder, who did not heed the child with a white, frightened face, standing, with skirts outspread, in an odd, fantastic attitude, before the angle of the wall.

"But why didn't you go when it was dark?" Katey asked, hurriedly, when she dared breathe again.

"'Cos I didn't know nuffin' 'bout de note, nor de perwisions nor nuffin', till mos' mornin', when I shied roun' to de house. 'Twor too late den, ye know." In his usual luckless, shiftless way he had let the golden moment slip by.

"What note?" His words were a maze to Katey.

"Why, de note yer Maum Earle gib Mammy las' night."

Truthfulness had never been one of Ben's characteristics, and the child disbelieved the whole story. Her mother had sent him no note, she was sure, and something like contempt arose in her mind, almost overcoming the pity she had felt for him.

"I wor gwine down dar now to tell yer maum."

"O, but, Ben, she won't help you." Katey forgot everything again in his danger. "You must go home; don't stay here. See how light it is now."

"I carn' go home, missy ;" and Ben leaned against the iron railing with a kind of dull resolution. "Ole mars'r down dere dis minute, mos' like ; an' de pleecemen ! Golly ! Missy Kate, de pleecemen jus' standin' round dat ar street, tree deep, I s'pose." Frightened as he was, Ben could not let the opportunity to dwell upon his suddenly acquired value pass unnoticed.

The faint grayness which still lingered in the atmosphere was fast melting away. Already the light had pierced Ben's corner, revealing a figure the strangeness of which would attract the attention of the first passer. Something must be done, and at once. To leave Ben to accomplish his own deliverance did not occur to the child. Certain schemes of the night before suggested themselves to her mind. "Come home with me," she said ; "I'll hide you. Only when it is dark again you must go away."

"Yes, missy," Ben replied, meekly. He had not the faintest conception of what the child proposed to do ; nor did it occur to him to inquire. It was enough that some one had assumed the responsibility of caring for him.

Katey started off down the street upon a run, Ben shuffling more slowly after her. One ambitious milk-wagon awoke the echoes of the street as she neared the great gate. Dacre Home lounged down the steps over the way, touching his cap half-mockingly as the child darted into the yard, and waited breathlessly for Ben to come up. She glanced fearfully towards the parlor windows ; but the curtains were still drawn. She had not realized how her flying feet had outstripped Ben's slower movements. Would he never come ? And now, while she waited, the momentary

excitement under which she had offered to assist him died away, and her heart grew heavy with forebodings. She knew full well the penalty for harboring a fugitive. The children playing in the street had talked of it; a thousand dollars fine, and imprisonment for not less than a year. A thousand dollars! She could never hope to pay that; so she would suffer longer in prison, doubtless; and a strange chill crept over her with the thought. Down upon a narrow, crooked street, not far away, which the children gained by darting through a dark alley of fearful repute, stood an old jail, gray and grim — a terror and a fascination. Katey shuddered at the recollection of the grated windows. Clinging to those dreadful bars, should she stare out upon the street some day? For a moment she wavered. Ben had crept in after her, and stood waiting, shrinking back against the high, black fence. She had weighed him with the instinct of childhood, and found him wanting. Only this moment she believed he had deceived her, and yet she could not turn him away. "Wait a minute," she said, swallowing a little sobbing sigh with which she put down the last of the temptations which rose within her to leave Ben to his fate. She stole softly up the high steps, and opened the heavy door carefully, then paused to listen. The house was still, save for Chloe's wild chant. The song had changed: —

"He bore our sins upon de tree."

The voice rose and died away; but it had awakened an echo in the child's heart. The significance of the words did not enter her head, but the little heart was lightened as she stepped back and beckoned to Ben.

Not a word did she speak as he removed his shoes, and, taking them in his hand, followed her noiselessly into the hall, and up the wide stairs to the square landing where they ended. Here was a high window, with the wide, old-fashioned window-seat half screened by heavy, faded hangings, and on either side doors, closed now, one of which Katey passed breathlessly, and, turning around the stair-rail, pushed open a narrower door, opening into a small, dark hall. There was scarcely light enough here to reveal the winding, almost upright stairs leading to the attic rooms. Only one of these was furnished now — that which the old actress had rented for a time. And though the high-posted bedstead, with its flowered chintz curtains, still remained, with the brass-mounted chest of drawers and queer old spider-legged dressing-table, the room had been long since given over to the dust and mystery of disuse. Katey ran up the stairs and opened the door with a certain sense of awe, treading lightly, as though fearful of arousing the spirit of the place; but Ben, conscious only of his happy escape, followed with assurance, chuckling to himself and cracking his finger-joints as he peeped between the red curtains, and convinced himself that the room had been long unoccupied. "Gorry, Missy Kate," he ejaculated, performing a kind of noiseless plantation dance about the child; "ole mars'r'll nebber fine Ben in dis yere place."

"Wait a minute," Katey replied. She led the way to the farther side of the bed, where was a low door in the partition, so low that even a child could not pass through without stooping. Ben dropped upon his knees and followed her as she disappeared, finding

himself in an unfinished garret, to which this low door seemed to be the only entrance. The place was full of great beams and rafters, and dim with shadows. But for the light through the open doorway and the rays of the morning sun struggling with the cobwebs at the little dust-begrimed window at one end, utter darkness would have reigned. A few discarded garments hung from hooks in the rafters, and a bundle of herbs under the eaves mingled its odors with the close, musty air of the place.

"Isn't it nice?" said Katey from a corner, her head in a cobweb.

"Gorry!" was Ben's sole response. He was quite overcome by this new development of resources.

"Now I must go down," said Katey. "It is breakfast time. I'll have to shut the door and push the bed up before it."

"O Lor', missy, don' do dat ar," gasped Ben, all his fears aroused by the thought of being thus entrapped.

"I must," Katey replied. "Then no one can see the door; but I'll come and let you out to-night when it is dark."

"But what if de pleecemen come nosin' roun'?" Terrors were crowding thick upon Ben now. "Ye'd say ye didn't know nuffin' bout dis nigger dese tree year; wouldn' ye?" he pleaded.

"But I *do* know," Katey answered with eyes opened wide.

"O Lor', Missy Kate! are you gwine to tell o' pore Ben?" He fell on his knees and clutched at her gown.

"Why, of course I'm not going to tell!" and Katey's astonishment increased still more.

"But what if dey come sudden like? What if dey s'prise ye?" he asked, doubtfully.

A vision of the Leverett Street Jail, of the Black Maria, rose before her; but she could not go back now. "I never shall tell," she repeated.

"But s'pose dey ask ye all manner o' cur'us questions to ketch ye? Swar, Missy Kate, say, 'By Gor A'mighty I nebber tell nobody 'bout dis nigger.'"

But Katey drew back horrified at the proposition.

"I can't do that," she said, stepping through the little doorway. Then she stooped so that the earnest face, with its great dark eyes and its cloud of heavy hair, were framed for a moment.

"Don't be afraid," she said; "*I never shall tell*;" and then she closed the door.

It was a more difficult matter to move the heavy bed. One or two attempts were vain; but finally putting forth all her strength, it started and rolled heavily over the floor, and was pushed against the door. She viewed it on every side. The entrance to Ben's retreat was quite hidden; and now she ran as softly and quickly as possible down the stairs.

The family were already seated at the breakfast table, and Chloe was bringing in the coffee-urn when she appeared.

"Pow'ful shower comin, missis," said Chloe, setting down the urn. "I hear de funder roll awful jus' now."

"Thunder," shouted Jack, "in winter, and hardly a cloud in the sky!"

"Don' care, Massa Jack," continued Chloe, who, having been long in the family, felt privileged to express her mind when and where she chose. "I hear it roll and rumble roun' jus' now."

Katey hid her flaming cheeks in her plate ; but no one heeded her, and Chloe left the room, followed by Jack's mocking laugh.

" I did hear something," said Madam Earle, checking him. " It must have been rats, I think."

CHAPTER VI.

ALMOST A MARTYR.

CHLOE'S prediction proved true in so far that a drizzling rain set in towards night, bringing the winter twilight earlier than usual. All day Katey had been tormented by fears in regard to Ben. What if her mother should chance to make one of her rare visits to the attic rooms, and Ben, thinking it herself, should call out? What if the "pleecemen," of whom he stood in such terror, should track him to the house in her absence? If she were only there she might perhaps prevent the discovery of his hiding-place, or warn him to escape.

At noon she ran all the way home, and as soon as she found an opportunity flew to the top of the house. Everything was undisturbed, however; the bed still occupied the place before the little door, and, leaning her head against the partition, no sound came from Ben's retreat. Perhaps he slept after his wakeful, wandering night; and somewhat relieved of her anxiety, the child crept noiselessly down again.

At night, less impatient, but more heavy-hearted under her weight of care, she plodded home in the rain, full of forebodings as to Ben's exit from the house. How could she ever accomplish it? She carried her drenched cloak to the kitchen, and lingered over the

fire, warming her chilled fingers, while Chloe moved heavily back and forth, preparing the tea. O, if she dared tell ! It would be so easy for Chloe to push the bed away, pilot Ben down the kitchen stairs, and let him out at the back gate ! As the wet, cheerless night settled in, and the time drew near when she must act, all her courage died away. The burden she had taken up seemed greater than she could bear. Chloe paused before the little drooping figure cowering over the fire. "What ails ye, honey ? Ye don't seem peart like as common."

Katey started up at that. Did her face tell her secret ?

"O, nothing," she answered, confusedly, as she left the room.

No, she could not tell Chloe, who would cry out and startle the family, most likely ; and what might not her mother believe it her duty to do with Ben ! A thought of Jack, her refuge in all times of trouble, of Jack fruitful in expedients, did cross her mind as she entered the parlor, where the heavy curtains were already drawn, and a soft, pleasant light and warmth filled the room. Her mother sat before the *escritoire*, writing. Neither Delphine nor Jack was there. But it did not matter ; she could not confide her secret to Jack, even. O, to think of Jack borne away in the Black Maria ! — the dreadful jail wagon which rattled about the streets to the intense horror of the children, who huddled close to the houses, shrinking, yet staring, as it passed. They might perhaps take her, but not Jack !

She stood just within the door, hesitating, held back by her fears, yet knowing that she must go now, at this moment, and release her prisoner. She had worked

herself into so excited and feverish a state that she could hardly keep from crying out. She was afraid of the darkness through which she must pass to reach him; her little arms were weak and trembling: could she ever make the heavy bed roll back? She must ask Chloe for a light. She shivered as she turned again to the kitchen, thinking of the unused, ghostly rooms above, the dark passage, and the narrow, winding stairs which she must mount alone. At that moment a heavy, resounding rap from the knocker upon the outer door echoed through the house. Another followed, as Chloe, never very swift in her movements, lingered before answering the summons.

"What is that?" There was something so peremptory in the call that Madam Earle laid down her pen and rose from her chair, behind which Katey fled instinctively. A loud, coarse voice was heard in excited colloquy with Chloe; then the parlor door was flung open, and the girl appeared, the hue of her dusky cheeks deepened, her head thrown back, and her eyes a blaze of light. She rested her hands upon her hips as she stood in the doorway, and looked back and forth from an invisible figure in the hall to her mistress.

"Look a he-ah, missis," she said in an excited tone; "dis 'ere man say he come for Ben! I tell him we don't no nuffin' 'bout dat ar lazy nigger."

Madam Earle stepped forward as a short, stout figure, surmounted by a coarse, swarthy face, appeared at the girl's elbow. "Chloe," she said, as the man entered the room, "hand a chair to the gentleman."

"'Clar' to goodness, missis, I carn' han' no cha'rs to such trash," responded Chloe, mutinous for the first time in a long and faithful servitude. She tossed her

head with a contemptuous snort, pressing her hands like a vice upon her sides.

Madam Earle set out a chair without speaking.

"Thankee, ma'am; but I reckon I'll stand whar I can see the door," replied the man, with an ugly leer.

"To what am I indebted for this visit?" asked Madam Earle, coldly. But even before she spoke he had begun a fumbling search in various pockets. He produced now a folded paper, which he tapped with a very dirty forefinger.

"I've got an officer out yere, ma'am," he said, "and this is a 'ficial document, a warrant, in fact, for the apprehension of a nigger calling himself Ben, and said to be in this house at this moment."

"Ain't no such nigger he'ah," broke in Chloe, defiantly.

"Sof'ly, gal, sof'ly," returned the man. "Your turn next, perhaps;" and again he winked, as though a one-sided spasm contracted his face. "He was seen coming into the yard early this morning," he explained, as he replaced the paper carefully in his breast pocket.

There was a faint sound, as of an exclamation suppressed, from the corner where Katey was hidden, but no one noticed it. Madam Earle, with a pale but composed face, stood quietly regarding the man, her hands resting upon the back of the chair she had offered him. Could it be true? she thought. Could Chloe have taken him in? But no; she herself had sent him in another direction the night before. He must be miles away on his northward journey by this time.

"I swar to goodness," added Chloe, "dat ar boy ain't been yere dese tree weeks. Some un's lied to ye."

"Sof'ly, sof'ly," said the man. "'Pears to me you look amazin' like a gal that run away from Columbus County ten year or so ago. I've got it writ down somewhere. But one at a time."

"I's born free. Ye carn' touch me," returned Chloe, indignantly; but she shrank back and was silent, nevertheless, as the intruder stepped to the door and called to a couple of policemen waiting outside. "One of you stand here and look right sharp while the other goes through the house with me. You're sure Bill is at the back gate?"

Madam Earle expostulated. "This certainly is unnecessary. I give you my word, my oath if you require it, that Ben is not in the house nor upon the premises."

The man only regarded her with an insulting smile of incredulity. "Seein's believing, ma'am. You might be mistaken, you know;" and again that awful facial contortion, intended for a wink. "Come, gal," — to Chloe, as he produced a dark lantern, — "show us about the house."

Chloe looked towards her mistress, but did not move.

"Either you must go or I," Madam Earle said to her. "I suppose we are obliged to submit to this."

"You're right, ma'am," returned the man, whose spirits seemed to rise each moment. "And amazin' wise, too. There's nothin' like resignation, *I* say. I've been a local preacher, myself, for a dozen years or so, and if there's any one doctrine above another I've felt called upon to expound, it's that of Christian resignation. When ye can't hold out nohow, sez I, *give in*. That's my idea of it. Now, ma'am," — and he rubbed his hands briskly, — "what's below this floor?"

"Only the unused kitchens and cellars."

"That's it. We'll take a look at 'em. Step lively, gal." And Chloe led the way from the room. Madam Earle and Katey were left alone. Now was Katey's time. Trembling and faint she crept into the hall. The officer on guard at the open door had turned his back to the house, and stood whistling softly to himself as she slipped out and mounted the stairs, her feet heavy as though shod with iron. But the upper hall once gained, sure that no eye could see her, she flew to the attic chamber, falling against the bed in her haste and in the bewildering darkness, which held for the moment no terrors, since other and greater had seized her. Creeping under the chintz valance, she felt with her hands for the low door; then, putting her lips to the crack, she called, in a shrill whisper, "Ben! Ben!"

There was no response.

"O, Ben!" she called again, striking her knuckles fearfully upon the panel. Doors were being opened and shut below, she fancied, and to her excited imagination there was even a step upon the stairs.

"Yah, Missy Kate," a cautious voice responded now. There was a sound as of some one rising stumbingly, and moving towards her. "I's ready. Ope de door."

"O, Ben," — and there were terror and agony in the whisper, — "they've come!"

"Who come?" Katey could hear his loud breathing close to her face.

"The men, for you!"

"Gor A'mighty! le' me out, le' me out o' dis yere, quick."

"I can't. They'd hear the bed roll. They're down stairs now. O, Ben, keep still; they're coming up;" and, too terrified to escape, the child clutched the bed hangings and hid her face.

It was a false alarm, however. She could presently hear voices in the rooms below, but no one mounted the stairs. She pressed her little pale face once more close to the crack. "Ben," she whispered, "don't be afraid! *I—never—shall—tell!*" Then she crept from under the bed, felt her way out of the room and down the stairs.

She had reached the little door giving entrance to the upper front hall, when it was suddenly flung open in her face; a dazzling light fell upon her, a hand grasped her arm and pulled her forward, while a harsh voice exclaimed, "Ha! what's this? What ye doing up yere? Ain't this the little gal I see down stairs? Speak up, now, what ye doing up yere?"

The little dark figure, with its frightened face, rested motionless in the hands of its captors. Not a word fell from the close-shut mouth.

"De chile done scart to def," said Chloe. "Run down to your maum, honey."

"You speak when you're spoken to;" and the man pushed Chloe aside roughly. "Come, child, whar've they hid this nigger?"

The awful moment had come. But the vision of the jail, of the Black Maria, of Ben in his retreat pleading for her silence, all faded away. She was conscious only of a strange whirr in her ears, as, with the great dark eyes fixed upon his, she stared at her inquisitor, fascinated, but speechless.

His heavy hand fell upon her shoulder. Chloe sprang forward. "Don' ye dar' touch dat chile!"

"The girl is right," said the officer, coming up. "You must not lay your hands upon the child."

"Come along, then," said the man, preparing to mount the narrow stairs. "She came down here." Katey, daring neither to follow nor to return to her mother in this moment of suspense, too frightened, indeed, to move from where they had left her, heard a sharply-uttered expletive as some one tripped over the last step, then, "Hark! What's that?" from the rough voice.

"Dat's de rats, gemmen," Chloe explained. "Better look up de chimley," she suggested, contemptuously, when the light had been thrown into every corner of the empty rooms, revealing only long-fallen dust and festooning cobwebs.

They entered the chamber through which the child and Ben had passed, making an unavailing search here as elsewhere. Chloe was too much engrossed to notice the change in the position of the bed. "Be you gemmen gwine up yere?" she asked, standing under the skylight, to which a short flight of stairs led. "Dat nigger hangin' by his eyelids from de roof mos' like," she added, with a laugh, saucy and confident, now that the search was so nearly concluded. The man, however, paid no attention to the words. He was walking back and forth, measuring the ceiling and partition with his eye. Suddenly he laid his hand upon the wall behind which Ben was hidden. "What's in here?" he questioned, suspiciously; "the front room don't come back to this."

Chloe, who began to feel impatient over his unwillingness to be convinced, turned again to the front chamber with an angry toss of the head. "Who's



A HAND GRASPED HER ARM AND PULLED HER FORWARD. Page 71.

been yere ? ” she muttered below her breath, noticing for the first time that the bed had been moved. Her mistress, most likely. She touched it with her strong hand, and it rolled back with a heavy, rumbling sound, revealing the door.

“ Ha ! ” exclaimed the man ; “ now, gal, open the door, and go in first with the light. We’ll follow. This begins to look like it.”

“ Look jus’ like it,” returned Chloe, opening it without the least hesitation ; “ as if de nigger done got in yere, shet de door, and pull up de bed ! ”

The little door flew back against the partition ; the light, scattering the darkness within, revealed — what ? Only dust and cobwebs, and the discarded garments hanging from the rafters ; nothing more. Chloe waved her lantern so that the glare should illumine every corner. But why did her eyes almost start from their sockets, while her teeth fairly chattered in her head ? As she stooped to pick up a garment which had apparently fallen from its nail, she recognized in it the old camlet cloak which she had carried to the parlor the night before, and which she had learned afterwards from Mammy had been given to Ben. She could not be mistaken ; it was the same, she knew. How came it there ? Where was Ben ? She glanced about fearfully, half expecting to see the shambling form emerging from the shadows. The men were examining the window. It was fastened upon the inside. Her presence of mind did not desert her. She shook out the cloak carelessly, and hung it up with the rest, then led the way in silence to the outer chamber. It was with a quaking spirit that she now saw the men prepare to explore the roof. “ I’ll ope de window,” she said,

officially, mounting the stairs with a great shuffling and stumbling noise, and raising the skylight only after having let it fall once with a warning clatter. But her fears were vain; the men returned alone, the jubilant spirits of the principal character in the search seeming to have deserted him as he retraced his steps slowly, pausing occasionally to ponder, and question, and explore some hidden corner on his way to the parlor, where by this time Delphine and Jack had joined their mother. In a few moments the door closed after their unwelcome visitors, and the family was left to itself again.

CHAPTER VII.

WHERE IS BEN ?

HARDLY had the gate swung to with a dull echo when Chloe rushed into the parlor ; upon her countenance was that peculiar ashen hue which in the dusky race betokens fright or sudden strong emotion. Her eyes appeared to have become detached, and to roll strangely in her head.

“ O Lor’, Missis, whar’s dat ar Ben ? ”

Madam Earle stared at the girl as though her senses had deserted her. “ What do you mean, Chloe ? ”

“ You shore he’s no in de house ? ” pursued the girl, who for the moment almost doubted her mistress. No one else could have hidden him.

“ Certainly not,” Madam Earle replied ; but her voice and manner were agitated. Could Chloe have learned the dangerous secret of how she had tried to aid Ben ? But Chloe was too much engrossed with the thought of her discovery to be thoroughly suspicious. She desired only to impart it. “ Wha’ you tink I foun’ up in de back attic ? ” she went on, breathlessly. Then she lowered her voice to an awful whisper as Jack and Delphine drew near : “ Dat ar camlip cloak you done gif Mammy las’ night ! ”

“ You were mistaken,” Madam Earle said, quickly ; “ you were excited, and so took something else for that.

It could not be," she added, decidedly. The camlet cloak by this time must be well on its way to Canada, she thought.

For reply, Chloe pulled something triumphantly from her pocket. It was a piece of brown wrapping-paper holding the remains of a sandwich. "I see dat ar when I stoop to pick up de cloak, and I done scrabble it in yere;" and the paper vanished into her pocket again.

What did it mean? A word of explanation from their mother was necessary for Delphine and Jack to comprehend the beginning of the mystery. "Mammy was in great trouble," she said; "I gave her the old camlet cloak, some sandwiches, and some money." She paused; not that she feared to confess the whole lest her children should inform against her; but a little flush warmed her pale face as she remembered the lesson she had impressed upon Delphine and Katey in regard to supporting the law. Then she went on quite humbly, "I knew, when I gave them to her, that she would use them all for Ben."

Delphine's arm crept about her mother's neck. "I'm so glad you have told us!" she whispered; "for I thought you were hard and cruel to her. See how unjust I have been!" Then Delphine's thoughts returned to Chloe's story. "But what does it mean?" she added, in the same breath.

"Put the chain across the door," said Madam Earle; "and, Chloe, see that all the doors and windows are fastened. We must look into this. Where is Katey?"

No one knew. No one remembered to have seen her. Chloe was appealed to. She recalled the incident upon the stairs. A horrible suspicion seized

Delphine. Wild stories of kidnapping floated about in these days, and poor little Katey was not of the fairest skin ; might not — Delphine flew into the hall, calling her name aloud ; Jack darted up the stairs ; Madam Earle and Chloe followed hurriedly, bearing lights. As they attempted to open the door of the room which Delphine and Katey occupied together, something resisted their efforts. It was Jack who crowded through the narrow space, and found a little dark heap lying against the door — who gathered the child up in his arms, and bore her, with awkward tenderness, down the stairs, depositing her upon the sofa in the parlor at last.

“ O, Jack ! ” she cried, throwing her arms around his neck, when, with a little sobbing sigh, the breath returned to the white lips, and the eyes opened to find Jack’s dear face bent over her. “ Don’t let them take me ! don’t let them take me ! O, I can’t go ! ” and in her terror her arms tightened about his neck.

“ Lord a massy,” wailed Chloe, “ de chile cl’ar gone crazy.”

But Madam Earle began to faintly surmise the truth. “ No one can take you, dear,” she said ; “ and they did not find Ben.”

Jack, who had been growing very red in the face under Katey’s convulsive embrace, was suddenly released. “ But I heard the bed roll back ; then I tried to hide,” she added.

“ He done gone, missy,” said Chloe ; and seeing that the child still stared as though she did not comprehend, she proceeded to elaborate her assertion. “ Run, streaked it, clar’d out,” she added, convincingly.

“ Gone ! ” and Katey sat upright. “ How could

he get out? I pushed the bed up against the door!"

Such confusion of exclamations, and kisses, and tears as this simple sentence evolved! "O, you bressed chile!" cried Chloe, falling down before her, and clasping her knees.

Little by little the story was told, Katey's head lying back in her mother's arms, Delphine holding her feet, and Jack making awkward dabs at her head occasionally, under the impression that he was stroking her hair.

Even her hesitation and fears before taking Ben into the house she did not hide. "You see," she said, apologetically, looking gravely from one to another of the little group, "I thought you might feel bad if they found it out, and took me away in the Black Maria."

Here Jack, whose countenance had been working in a fearful and wonderful manner while he stared fixedly at the wall before him, uttered a sound between a snort and a groan, and bolted from the room. Delphine embraced the little worn shoes. "You are a born heroine, dear," she said. But Madam Earle shook her head as she stroked the dark cheek lying against her arm. "Child, what will you do next!" she said.

"Now, missis, don' you scole dat pore chile," interposed Chloe.

And no one scolded Katey.

When the excitement and surprise were over, they returned, one and all, to the first question: where was Ben? "I will go up to the attic, and see for myself," Madam Earle said. But no one would be left behind. Even Katey followed the others, half carried in Chloe's

strong arms. Could Ben, by any possibility, be lurking still in the house? Katey called his name softly as they went on, but there was no response. The bed was pushed back from before the low door in the front attic; the door itself stood open, as Chloe had left it. "Ben!" called the child; but no one replied, and one after another they passed through the narrow opening, Chloe holding the lamp high above her head to light the darkness. The place was empty of human presence save themselves. But Chloe had spoken the truth; the old camlet cloak was suspended from the nail where she had hung it.

How had Ben escaped? "Through the window," Delphine suggested. But it was fastened by a nail upon the inside.

"I know!" exclaimed Jack; "I had forgotten all about it." He parted the ghostly garments hanging from the beams, and pointed to a trap-door fitted so nicely as to be quite concealed except upon close inspection, and so near to the floor in the slope of the roof as to be easily gained.

"And the oddest part of it is," he went on, "that when it is shut you would never notice it from the outside."

"Ben must have discovered it during the day, and escaped when Katey warned him; but where?" queried Madam Earle, letting the garments fall back into their place again.

"O, I've been out there," Jack replied. "You can creep along to the chimney, and then slide down to the shed roof; and from there it is nothing to drop to the fence, and so to the street."

"Then they haven't found him?" asked Katey, doubtfully: she was not yet convinced.

"Found him? No, indeed. Ben is safe enough," returned Jack in a tone of such entire conviction that Katey's heart was eased of its burden.

All the next day she lay upon the sofa in the parlor, prostrate under the weakness and languor which followed her unnatural excitement. But no queen upon a throne ever received such homage. Delphine wrote her French exercises close by her pillow; Jack, upon his knees before her, poured out his whole store of treasures — stringless tops, bats for lost balls, a collection too numerous for mention — and, last of all, a wonderful ship, of his own construction, which was like no craft ever afloat. Even Chloe expended all her skill in the building of a surprising tart, which was brought in upon an old-fashioned china plate, and presented with as much ceremony as though it had been the freedom of a city. And after a time Mammy appeared, — poor Mammy, who was still in doubt as to Ben's fate, — in a series of dips which were nothing less than heavy gymnastics, making of her approach, through the periodical inflation of her scant petticoats, a succession of "cheese-cakes" marvellous to witness. She fairly submerged Katey in watery blessings and benedictions. "Dis yere chile," she said at last, solemnly, "is 'lected fo' some mighty porpoise. De Lor bress ye, honey! De Lor will bress ye," she added, raising her head and gazing away beyond Katey, with the far-seeing eyes of prophecy.

It was during Mammy's visit that Katey learned of Ben's errand to the old Quaker. And now, with something tangible before her, something really to wait for and expect, her excitement and anxiety increased every moment. As the day wore on, the pale cheeks

became so flushed, the dark eyes so unnaturally bright, that Madam Earle's fears were aroused. "Dear child, try to forget it all," she said, turning the hot pillow; "we shall hear something by morning, perhaps; but close your eyes now, and go to sleep."

"Yes, ma'am," Katey replied, obediently; but in a moment the great shining eyes were following her mother about the room. "They open themselves," Katey explained, humbly. Slowly the long day wore away; the wind wailing drearily in the chimney, the rain falling steadily against the window-pane.

The heavy curtains were drawn at last, shutting out the trickling drops, and the high, bare brick wall over the way. The fire brightened in the darkness, the wailing wind was stilled, and Katey fell into a troubled sleep, from which she was aroused by a startling peal upon the knocker. Even Madam Earle felt her heart cease to beat for a moment, as she held clasped tight in her arms the form of the child who had sprung up with a cry. The fire-light shone upon Chloe's startled face thrust into the room. "Shall I ope de door, missis?" she asked, in a hoarse whisper. "What ef dat ar kidnap done come agin?"

"Certainly you must open the door; but bring a light first."

There was a moment of suspense as Chloe's shuffling step moved through the hall. They heard the cautious opening of the heavy door, then the fall of the clanking ~~chain~~, followed by the cheering tones of Chloe's echoing laugh. Madam Earle laid the child back upon her pillow. Even Katey knew that their dreaded visitor had not come.

"How does thee do?"

An old gentleman stood just within the door, his face almost hidden under the broad-brimmed, gray felt hat he had not yet removed. His straight-bodied coat, and even his hair, were of this same gray hue, reminding Katey of a doll she had owned once, knit of gray yarn from head to foot, and bound off at the toes. His eyes were bright, and black, and shining, she could see as he advanced to meet her mother,—like beads, she said, still thinking of the doll,—and then she laughed aloud.

“Ah! so this is the child;” and he turned to the sofa, laying his hand softly upon Katey’s head.

“And this is Jason Miles,” her mother explained; “the good man to whom I sent Ben. And now —”

But Katey sat upright among her pillows. “*Where is Ben?*”

The old gentleman laughed,—a little, wheezing laugh, which shook his body without materially affecting his countenance.

“He is safe; but that is all I can tell thee now. Will thee not rest satisfied?”

“I suppose it’s a secret,” Katey replied, slowly. She had her own ideas as to honor—quaint, childish ideas, but true in the main; and she asked nothing more of Ben, much as she desired to know where and how he had escaped.

“Yes, a great secret;” and again the rusty machinery within the old gentleman seemed to run down noisily. Then he turned to her mother. “I knew thee would be anxious about the apples,” he said, with a twinkle of the bright eyes; “so I brought them as soon as possible. I got the note about midnight. Thee had better know nothing more; then thee can

answer no questions." He rose up as though his errand were done. "My son is at the gate. We will roll the barrels in at once. I am in some haste to return. Good by, little one, and God bless thee for a brave child!" He stood a moment over Katey, his hands resting upon her head, and she fancied he said something softly to himself. Then he followed her mother out of the room.

She lay quite still after he had gone. A blessed quiet had descended upon her, like that which filled the church when the people bowed their heads to the last amen. By and by Jack crept in to sit beside her, awed into silence at sight of the white face from which the flush had faded away, and Delphine before the old piano sang a little song in her sweet voice. It was a restful song, which had in it yet something of thanksgiving, and it stole into Katey's heart, and nestled and crooned there softly, as she sank into a gentle sleep.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN WHICH THE OLD YOUNG MAN APPEARS.

A TIME of rest from excitement succeeded — the ebb after a flowing tide. So far as the Earle household knew, no other search was ever made for Ben, who was assuredly not worth the trouble of pursuit. He escaped in safety to Canada, returning, when the excitement had died away, the same shiftless, helpless character as before, aggravated, however, by a new sense of his own importance; and the little back attic hid never again anything duskier than the shadows.

Gradually the winter wore out and the spring peeped through. Not the spring of the country, all buds, and birds, and blossoms; and yet something of bloom came even to Poplar Street. Certain demented robins — for surely no bird of a sound mind would seek the crowded, noisy town — came to build in the apple trees in the back yard — the poor old trees that had nearly overslept the time of waking, and shook out only a scant banner of green as the spring went trailing by. • White syringas and an old-fashioned lilac bloomed under the parlor windows, while across the narrow front yard, the honeysuckle, climbing the ugly brick wall, threw out delicate arms to sway, and beckon, and promise sweets to the summer.

With the spring came a new wonder to Katey. The old young man who had danced with Delphine at the party began to appear at every turn. What did it mean? Did they walk quietly down the street, bent upon a mission of charity, to Mammy, perhaps — lo! as they reached the first corner he stood before them, smiling, and bowing, and raising his hat. The basket in Delphine's hand was changed to his own; he walked by her side unrebuked, and even welcomed, which Katey, who was left to follow as she chose, marked with indignant astonishment.

He seemed to the child to spring up from between the bricks of the sidewalk, so unlooked for was his coming. Did they attend church — out from the shadows under the heavy old-fashioned gallery his face beamed upon them; did Katey come strolling home late from school — she was sure to catch a glimpse against the syringa blossoms of Delphine's pink gown vanishing through the gateway, and the next moment the well-known form passed her, the old young man smiling and raising his hat. "Smiling at nothing at all," Katey said to herself, giving him a stiff little bow as she passed. "Silly thing!" she added, from the depths of her superior wisdom. But her astonishment knew no bounds when, one afternoon as she came down the street, she saw him deliberately entering the great gate. She started upon a run, swinging her bonnet by the strings with an indignant whirl at the sight of this invasion. Her eyes had surely deceived her! But no; when she pushed open the heavy gate he stood upon the broad stone steps before the door. His hand was upon the knocker; but at Katey's appearance he paused.

"Well, little one," he said pleasantly, by way of greeting, as the elfish figure, clad soberly in brown, with the little bonnet still hanging by her side, came up to him. Katey made no reply. The occasion plainly called for severity. She opened the door with an absorbed and pre-occupied air, and would have disappeared among the soft, cool shadows within, had he not stretched out his hand to detain her. "Could I see Miss Earle a moment? Your sister."

"O, Delphine," Katey said. Then why did you say "Miss Earle," she wanted to add, as, leaving him upon the threshold of the parlor, from which the summer sunshine had been shut out, she ran away to call Delphine.

The young man groped forward. After the dazzling glare of a summer day outside, he could distinguish nothing among the faint, ill-defined forms here. It was odd to think that the great, prone creature before him might in the light prove only a sofa, or — then there was a sound as of a swift step upon the stairs, and the child appeared again, a veritable brownie in the dim light.

"You found her?" he ventured, interrogatively.

"Yes," with a little drawl of importance.

"Well," — when Katey volunteered nothing more, — "what did she say?"

The child had crossed the room, and, opening the blind, let in a long, quivering ray of sunshine, in which she stood like a droll little saint, with a glistening halo about her head. She hesitated a moment, folding her hands and looking down.

"She said —" she began.

"Well!"

"She said," Katey went on with grave deliberation, " 'What in the world has he come for?' "

The young man stared open-eyed, and then laughed, viewing Katey as though she had been a newly-discovered species.

"Perhaps *you* would like to know what I have come for?"

Yes, Katey's face betrayed her curiosity; but at that moment, Delphine, sweet and shy, appeared in the doorway, dismissing the child by a backward wave of the hand as she closed the door. Katey sat down upon the stairs to await the development of the mystery. Presently Delphine, who had slipped out of the parlor unobserved, tripped over her as she hurried by. "What are you doing here, child? Run away."

She rose and mounted the stairs slowly. But she had hardly ensconced herself in the window-seat of the hall above, before Delphine descended, accompanied this time by her mother. The parlor door closed upon them. Curled up behind the curtains, with the heavy odor of the lilacs stealing in at the open window, and the soft twilight slowly gathering outside, she waited and listened. A great bumble-bee went whirring by to the honeysuckle over the way; the bit of blue sky discernible between the high brick houses was drifted over with summer clouds; there was a twitter of birds in the elm just outside the great gate; but no sound came from the mysterious stillness below. After a time she heard Chloe's heavy tread in the hall, and a faint glimmer from the swinging lamp over the stairs reached her hiding-place. All at once, when she had almost decided to steal down in

search of Jack, the echo of voices came up to her. The parlor door had been opened, the outer door swung to, and a sudden stillness succeeded. The visitor had gone.

She sprang out and ran down the stairs. Jack had come in, and the family were seating themselves at the tea table. Her mother's face was unusually grave, and upon Delphine's cheeks were unmistakable signs of recent tears. "O, dear! what can it be?" thought Katey, too proud to ask, since she had been so plainly left out of their confidence. Jack alone appeared as usual. He was in high spirits, and gradually, in listening to his account of the trials and adventures with which every boyish day was full, her curiosity was forgotten, and the mystery of the afternoon passed from her mind.

Lying in her little white bed at night, she was awakened as though her name had been uttered aloud. She opened her eyes,—was it morning? No; it was the bright moonlight which flooded the room, and made of Delphine, standing before the window with her hair unbound, a white-robed spirit.

Katey gave a little cry, and hid her face from the vision.

"It is only I. Are you awake?" said Delphine. She crossed the room, and sat down upon the edge of the bed. "I want to tell you something." And Katey, looking into her shining face, and seeing the glint of glory on her hair, trembled, and felt that perhaps it was an angel, after all. She put out her hand to touch her softly. A passing cloud hid the moon. The glory died out of the room, and it was indeed only Delphine, with her golden-brown hair falling over

her shoulders, and with an untold story in her face. "Do you know what I am going to tell you?"

"No," Katey replied. How should she know! and if she did, what would be the use of telling it!

"I am going to be married," said Delphine, dreamily, and as though to herself.

"Why, Delphine Earle!" exclaimed the child, sitting upright in the bed.

She had thought of marriage indefinitely, as a state upon which they would each and all enter at some distant period of their lives—an inevitable event; but so far away, so shrouded in the dimness of futurity, as to be beyond all calculation. Delphine, it seemed, had forestalled the time, and Katey's first impulse was one of indignation.

"I shall tell mother," she said, severely.

Delphine laughed. "O, she knows it. She said I might tell you."

This made a different affair of it, and Katey was for a time lost in astonishment and the gravest calculations.

"Do you know whom I am to marry?" Delphine went on, after a moment.

Katey considered. "O, Delphine, it *isn't* that old young man?"

"Yes, it is, and I am sure you will like him."

Katey only uttered a deep sigh, without speaking. Then, aroused to fresh wonder, "Does *he* know it?" she asked.

"O, yes;" and again Delphine laughed.

"Are you sorry?" continued Katey, remembering the tears upon Delphine's cheeks.

"No, only that I shall have to go away from you all;" and the tears sprang to Delphine's eyes.

A cold horror crept over Katey. "Not to heaven?" she whispered.

"O, no, but I shall go away to live at Robert's home; and that is a long distance from here — four hundred miles, at least."

"O, dear!" wailed the child.

"There, don't cry." Delphine's cheerful nature began to assert itself at sight of Katey's woe. "You will come and make me long visits. Perhaps some day you may live with me; who knows! Then you shall have a pretty little room all to yourself — not at all like this;" and she glanced about rather disdainfully upon the heavy furniture, which had seen its best days. "But lie down and close your eyes now; it is time we were both asleep."

She rose as she spoke, and shut the moonlight out of the room. Other questions crowded Katey's brain confusedly, but were never formed into words, for already the little feet were close upon the borders of dream-land.

The next morning, however, her interest and curiosity awoke with the day. "When are you going to be married?" she asked, as she brushed out the tangles in the short black locks.

"I don't know — in a few weeks," Delphine replied. "Mother says it is a very short acquaintance, but then we know all about the family."

"What is the matter with 'em?" asked Katey.

"I mean how fine a family it is," Delphine replied. "And O, Katey, you don't know how honorable he was!"

As Katey certainly did not, and had, moreover, no idea as to the meaning of the word, she contented herself with looking exceedingly responsive, being much flattered by Delphine's unusual confidence.

"He talked with mother before he said a word to me."

"Why, Delphine Earle," exclaimed the child, "he was in the parlor with you a long time before you went up stairs to call mother. I was hiding in the hall," she added, as corroborating evidence.

"But he had been here before, when neither you nor I was at home."

The breakfast bell interrupted their conversation. Delphine paused, as she was leaving the room, to say, "He is coming to tea to-night. You'll be a good little girl, will you not? and appear as well as you can; for his people are all quite fine."

"Are *they* coming?" Katey was aghast at the prospect.

"O, no; but he would be likely to tell them about you."

"I don't think much of tell-tales," was Katey's severe response.

"O, dear!" sighed Delphine, in despair, looking down at the little figure standing composedly before the glass, pulling out the sombre folds of its gown, and knowing full well of what unexpected developments the child was capable. "Listen to me, Katey," she said; "I want him to like my little sister, do you see? and that is why I asked you to try to appear well."

"And so I will," Katey replied, warmly; "I'll be a *beautiful* girl."

When she pushed open the heavy street door at night, the tones of a strange voice came out to her from the parlor. Robert Estemere, Delphine's lover, had come, then, already. At that moment Delphine descended the stairs. There was a fleck or two of

yellow-white lace about the neck of the green pongee, above which rose the fair face flushed and happy, and lit by shining eyes. And as she came she hummed a little song.

"Is that you, Katey?" checking the song. "Run away, dear, and make yourself nice." Then she passed on, and the parlor door closed after her. Katey ran up the stairs with the bright vision still before her eyes. She, too, would be fine to honor their guest. She tossed the little brown bonnet into the corner of the room, and began a search, among the heavy drawers and in the depths of the great wardrobe, for something with which to adorn herself. Suddenly she remembered Delphine's curls. At least she could dress her hair in an unusual way; and, filled with prophetic delight, she brought out a curling-iron, and lit one of the candles in the tall candelabrum on the mantel, making all the pendent prisms jingle like bells.

What though she burned her fingers and streaked her forehead with queer hieroglyphics in her efforts? Even when the first curl vanished from before her eyes in fire and smoke, as do the genii in fairy tales, she was neither discouraged nor dismayed. The final result was a succession of droll little stiff points standing out at every conceivable angle, as though she had adorned her head with tenpenny nails. "Won't he be s'prised?" she thought, viewing them admiringly in the glass before proceeding to array herself in a last summer's gown of some bright hue, which had caught her eye as she explored the recesses of the wardrobe. Very scant it was in every particular, requiring a herculean effort of the little

fingers to make the refractory hooks and eyes join hands. No amount of pulling could lengthen the sleeves or prevent a deep flounce of white from showing below the skirt. This she essayed to remedy by means of a couple of pins, transforming herself into a ballet-dancer, but a ballet-dancer, alas! who had forgotten her white slippers. Even then the back breadths of the skirt could not be reached by the hurrying, trembling fingers, startled as she was by the unexpected sound of the tea bell; but the ornamentation of her head also had been only in front; "and people always sit with their backs to the wall," she thought, so it did not much matter. Though how very fortunate it was that it should be so! There were no bounds to her ingenuity, nor indeed to her desires, as she hastily searched among Delphine's treasures, conscious that her own were not equal to the occasion, nor suited to the grand scale of her preparations. Her time being limited, she contented herself with a showy scarf, crossed upon her proud little bosom, and fastened by an enormous brooch, which, upon the diminutive figure, had much the effect of a moderate-sized breastplate. Thus bristling about the head, and tolerably shielded, armed, and equipped for conquest, she was ready to descend; filled with an ecstatic joy, a thrilling sense of delight at the result of her efforts, in the midst of which struggled the one thought of "Won't he be s'prised?" Of that she had no doubt.

She reached the parlor door. She opened it with assurance, and moved stiffly into the room; shuffling forward in a way intended to hide her dusty shoes, remembered now for the first time. Jack had already

been presented to the stranger, and taken refuge in a corner. Her mother had risen from her chair prepared to lead the way out to tea. Delphine and her lover were half hidden behind the heavy curtains of one of the windows. The opening door caused every one to turn.

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Delphine, involuntarily, as the strange little figure, with its face tattooed like that of a South Sea Islander, paused a moment before advancing. At the same instant a suppressed shout burst from Jack's corner. An awful pause succeeded, in the midst of which the strained fastenings of the gown began to give way with a noise like the discharge of musketry. Jack started from his seat. Delphine laughed aloud.

"Child! what have you done to yourself?" exclaimed her mother.

Poor Katey! She looked from one to another with great beseeching eyes, in which the tears were slowly gathering, as her mother led her hastily from the room.

"I don't know what to do with you," Madam Earle said, in a puzzled tone, trying not to laugh, as the mortification and grief of the child gathered into sobs. She hesitated. The guest must not be neglected. "I think you had best go to bed. Chloe shall bring you some supper presently. There, don't cry, dear;" and kissing the little tattooed forehead, she returned to the parlor, while Katey climbed the stairs with far different emotions from those with which she had descended a few moments before.

It was Jack who, with much clatter and rattle, and imminent peril to his burden, sought her a little later,

a supper tray in hand. She was lying upon the bed in all her despised finery, sobbing as though her heart would break. "O, Jack! isn't it dreadful? He'll tell all his folks, and they're *beautiful* people."

"No, he won't," returned Jack, consolingly, setting down the tray at an alarming angle.

"Yes, he will; Delphine said so," persisted Katey, refusing to be comforted.

"He isn't such a fellow as that, I'm sure," Jack went on. "He's going to rig my ship after tea."

"Is he?" Katey's tears ceased to flow. "That will be real nice. But O, Jack! I've got to go to bed!"

"No, you needn't. Mother only said so, because she didn't know what else to do with you. My!" as Katey sat upright, inspired with hope at this. "Well, you are a picture!" The problem was almost beyond Jack's skill. He regarded her doubtfully for a moment. "Suppose you wash your face, and comb out that top-knot, and put on the clothes you always wear; you might come down and slip into the parlor, and no one would notice you."

Katey turned her head upon one side doubtingly.

"I'll tell them not to," Jack burst out, ignoring his bashful fears by a mighty effort.

"Will you? O, you are the goodest Jack!" and Katey intercepted his retreat by throwing her arms about his neck.

"Well, don't choke a fellow," said Jack, struggling to get free, inwardly pleased that his efforts were appreciated, yet, boy-like, determined not to show it. "Mind, no fol-de-rols this time," he added, sharply, from the door.

"O, no," Katey replied, with awful solemnity. "I shouldn't think of such a thing."

Half an hour later, a little brown figure stole down the stairs, and lingered in the hall, where a summer wind blew rustling leaves in at the open door, with the sound of a street organ, and the jingle of a tambourine. After a while, when the music and the tinkle of the bells sounded far away, Katey crept towards the parlor. No one noticed her; no one looked up or greeted her. Delphine, before the old piano, touched soft chords with gentle fingers, the breeze lifting the curtains behind her, and stirring her hair. Madam Earle sat in the shadow, her head turned away, and resting upon her hand. Jack's round, freckled face was close to the blazing lamp, disputing possession with the moths that flew dizzily about, while he watched every movement of his new friend, under whose skilful fingers the rigging of the ship went on. Soon Delphine left the piano. Katey ventured to draw near, and even Madam Earle at last joined the circle, and the evening, begun so inauspiciously, had a very pleasant, and even merry ending, after all.

Delphine's wedding followed before many weeks — the first break in the family. But the little rift once made, how it widens as the years go by! They were very peaceful, uneventful years which settled down upon the old house after Delphine's sunny presence left it, the happiest years of all — those which tempt no one to write their history. One by one they fell softly, each covering the last with forgetfulness. Katey's odd freaks and fancies passed out of mind, as they were toned down by the touch of womanhood. For Katey was growing to be a woman. Jack had arrived at man's estate already. Have we dwelt too

long upon the child, and the people who moved in and out, and formed a part of her daily life? Many, perhaps the most of them, were but accessories to the picture, but lay figures—in however strong a light they were placed at the time. In the days of our great-grandmothers, when it was the fashion to transmit one's portrait to his or her descendants, it was not the face alone, however grand or sweet it might be, which found a place upon the canvas. There was a shimmer of soft silk, a fall of yellow lace, a bit of marble pavement under the impossible feet, the back of an old carved chair, the projecting corner of a cabinet surmounted by an antique vase, or possibly an open door or window, and a smooth stretch of lawn, with the towers of a castle in the distance. All these were not—and yet they helped to make up—the portrait of a lady. And so Katey's early surroundings and associations may serve in some measure to show the child-nature which was the same to the end. Years will strengthen or soften, they can never utterly destroy. In a few words, we may gather up the threads of these years before we pass on.

Sad days came at last to the old house where the mother began to fade away; imperceptibly at first, not losing, only failing to gain, with the gathering years. Gradually Katey assumed her cares, until she bore them all, with a burden of dread heavier than care. She was alone; Jack had gone to be agent for some stone quarries in which Delphine's husband held an interest. She was doubly alone; Jack had Josie Durant,—for the boyish fancy grew and strengthened, and he had won her promise now,—Delphine had her husband and child; but to Katey was left only the

mother, who was slipping away now. O, to know this, at last, beyond all comfort of doubting; to feel that strong hands could not hold her, that neither prayers nor tears could avail; to have the awful sense of walking day after day in the valley of the shadow of death, with feet heavy and sore, and eyes blinded by crying; to grope in the midst of thick darkness; to stretch out the hands and grasp nothing; to know that, somewhere, into this darkness, the dear form would presently vanish where she could not follow!

She knew that around, above, beneath, were the everlasting arms; but in those days they seemed to her to enclose only the happy. Then came the last hour, the last word, the last trembling breath — and the darkness.

But the Light shineth in darkness.

The old house, with all its tender associations, passed into the hands of strangers. It passed from the face of the earth and the sight of men years ago; but the loving memory of the place rests in the heart of one woman to-day. Chloe sought and found a new home, and Delphine claimed Katey for her own, bearing her away to her own home in a distant city.

"Perhaps you will live with me some day," she had said once to assuage Katey's childish grief; little dreaming that the words would prove a prophecy, fulfilled a dozen years later, through more bitter tears than those which had wet the little face at the prospect of Delphine's marriage.

It had been autumn and winter while the mother was passing away — the very season taking on something of the gloom and heaviness of the sad young

heart that waited and watched so helplessly. The spring bloomed out in Delphine's city home like a promise of happier days. Hope, and even joy, will return, though we think they are banished forever; and the late summer of that year brought to Katey, if not flowers, yet a certain freshness, and something like bloom, which showed that life was not meant to be so dreary and forlorn as she had believed it would be only a little time before.

CHAPTER IX.

DACRE HOME.

AGAIN the autumn and the winter passed by, and Katey had become accustomed to the new life, which, in its ease and luxury, was so unlike the old, but which must always hold one place unfilled. They had come down to the sea, Mrs. Estemere, Katey, and Launce, Delphine's boy, a long way from their city home, to spend the summer months. The Durants had taken a house close by, just across the gravelly carriage-way and strip of lawn dotted with flower plots which ran before the cottages, — in the last of which they were domiciled, — from the hotel to the cliff. It was a hot, breathless morning, with the sun hanging like a globe of fire over the shining sea and glistening sands. Katey had descended late, to find Delphine already gone for her bath. Calamity, the colored waiter from the hotel, had brought in the breakfast, and was making the coffee now in the little butler's pantry, out of the toy dining-room. She pulled up the blinds, and seated herself before the table set out in the bay-window, which framed a picture shifting as the views of a magic lantern. A straggling honeysuckle branch, crowded with blossoms, barred her vision, while beyond, below the cliff, the yellow sand stretched out far as the eye could see, alive with bathers.

Some one ran hastily up the steps from the beach, and passed the window. It was Delphine in a pink morning-dress, her hair twisted up loosely under her wide-rimmed hat, but falling in damp, crinkling waves down upon one cheek. Fresh and sweet to look at, as a young girl, she was, though she had been wife and mother for a dozen years or more now.

"Whom do you think I met this morning?" She stood before the table eating strawberries from the glass dish encircled with cool, green leaves, just before her, picking them up one by one with her pink-tipped fingers. How did Katey know? The Russian minister, perhaps, in his drosky, after whom, in any other place but this, where common things only were strange and unlooked-for, the boys would have run in the street; or Mrs. Colonel Cuyler, with her hideous black dwarf in the rumble of her phaeton; or —

"Dacre Home!"

"Ah!" but Katey's face showed only a passing interest. "Here is Calamity with the coffee. Was ever misfortune more welcome?"

"But you remember him?" persisted Mrs. Estemere, when she had unloosed the little silk scarf, tying her hat under her chin, and was seated opposite her sister.

"O, yes!" There flashed upon Katey's mind a recollection of the morning when she ran down Poplar Street, followed by poor quaking Ben, when Dacre stood upon the steps over the way, and saw him enter the great gate after her. He told of it, she knew. It was he who informed the officers. That was a dozen and more years ago; but again she was thrilled with indignation at the thought. "How childish!"

she added, in a moment, to herself. "It was probably accidental, after all. I suppose I should hardly know him now," she said, aloud. "He went away to school when we were both quite young, and I never chanced to meet him afterwards."

"I am sure you would. I recognized him at once," Delphine rejoined, hastily. She was evidently pleased by this unexpected meeting. "And I asked him to call."

Katey laid down her fork. "How could you?"

"How could I avoid it? Besides, I was thoroughly glad to see him. We knew him when we were children. It was for you, dear. What do you mean? I thought you would be pleased." Then she drew a frightened breath, and stared at the innocent blossoms that had thrust their pink faces in at the open window. "I fear I ought not to have asked him, after all. What have we heard? What were the stories? Some affair at college —"

"He never finished his course, I believe," Katey replied. "He was expelled, or left under suspicion. I don't know the story; I could not ask Jeanie, but there was something."

"Then what did he appear to me for!" exclaimed Mrs. Estemere, in real vexation. "Why do such people always come up when you least expect them, and have had no time to decide upon how they ought to be received?"

"Very likely you'll never see him again," suggested Katey, consolingly.

"O, yes, I will; I shall meet him the first time I leave the house; and he will call, I know. -I saw it in his face. He seemed quite overcome by the invi-

tation. Poor fellow! I suppose nobody is glad to see him. Perhaps it is not so bad, after all. Such stories are always exaggerated," she added, anxious to find some point of comfort in what appeared now an awkward dilemma. "But I cannot allow you to meet him; not, at least, until I learn something more. And, as you say, we may never see him again."

At night Calamity came down from the hotel with a steaming kettle in one hand, and a plate of toast wrapped in a napkin in the other, running back for the butter and a dish of berries, with which he marked his course the length of the carriage way, and again for the shrimps and cresses. The bustle was over at last, the tea served, the tea-things cleared away, and Katey had gone up to her room to write a note to Jack. She would run over to Josie Durant's, and enclose it in her semi-weekly letter presently when it was finished. She was writing the last word when she heard a step outside upon the gravel, then a voice, and a movement down below upon the veranda. She sprang up, urged by curiosity; the letter upon her knee fluttered down to the floor. But she was too late; the roof of the veranda screened the visitor from her sight, whoever he might be. She had not recognized his voice, but Delphine would send for her if it were one of the many acquaintances whom the pretty mistress of the little buff cottage had gathered about her here.

It must be Dacre, Katey thought, when the hot, still twilight settled into a breathless darkness, and yet no summons came. She groped about in vain for a light. Where was Dobry — Delphine's maid? She had forgotten to leave a candle. She found her way

at last to the open window again. Something slipped under her foot. It was the note to Jack. Josie would mail her letter without it now, believing she had not written. It was a pretty little cottage, this which they had taken for the summer — all gables, and dormer-windows, and cream-colored peaks and points, glaringly bright, and dazzling under a midday sun. But to-night, with no breeze from the sea, the chambers were hot and stifling, and it was double torment to be shut up like a prisoner here throughout the whole long evening.

Mrs. Estemere looked in on her way to bed.

“What, still in the dark, Katey? This is quite too bad. Where is Dobry?”

“Then it was Dacre?” And Katey stepped out of the shadows into the circle of light from the candle in Delphine’s hand.

“Yes; and you might have come down, after all. Still, I am not sorry,” she added, thoughtfully, seeming to drop out of the present moment into the past hour again, of which Katey had heard only the murmur of voices. “He has told me a great deal about himself; and I think he has been abused.”

“Perhaps so.” Katey spoke indifferently. She knew nothing of the story. Still her prejudices were against him. Something within her rose up and joined his accusers.

“He is coming again,” Delphine said, as she was leaving the room. “That is, if he does not go away at once.” Then she set down her candle, and kissed Katey good night. And a new chapter had begun already in Katey’s life, though she knew nothing of it.

The summer twilight was like a story — like a beau-

tiful old story read to the accompaniment of music, with the great far-spreading, luminous sea before the eyes, and the dull, hushed noise of the surf rolling in upon the ear, as though some fearful dragon of ancient times lay bound and moaning upon the shore. Straggling carriages, filled with gayly dressed people, toiled home across the sands. Young men and maidens trooped by along the cliff—an endless procession. Year after year the sea heard a story more beautiful than that of the twilight—whispered softly or shouted aloud by happy voices, shrill and gay; the story of youth, and love, and summer time. The voices, the forms, the faces may change; but the story will go on while the world stands and the sea crouches upon the shore to listen.

Katey, tall and slight, and holding up her white gown, caught here and there with black ribbons, stepped out from the veranda. The little strip of lawn was wet with dew, which might have blown in from the sea, so salt it was; the Cupid's bow set in the grass flamed with scarlet geraniums.

“Allow me, if it is a nosegay you want,” said a young man who had followed her, moving languidly down the steps. But Katey was already bending over the flowers. “Don't disturb yourself, Mr. Vose. I was looking for heliotropes; but there are none, I see;” and she rose again. Some one, coming up from the cliff, turned at the sound of her fresh, sweet voice—a young man whose eyes met hers. Dark eyes they were, set tolerably near each other in a dark, smooth face. For an instant she stood quite still, holding the white drapery about her, some recollection struggling in her mind, the darkening space be-

hind her, the bright flowers at her feet; then he had raised his hat and passed on. Delphine was right; she knew him now; it was Dacre Home, though for a moment his face had been strange to her. But where had he been all this time? A week had passed since he came to win Mrs. Estemere's good opinion. He was evidently in no haste to follow up his victory.

Katey was down before Delphine the next morning. What was this upon her plate?—a loose knot of wet, heavy-scented heliotropes. "Mr. Vose," she said. And yet he was not accustomed to be abroad at such an early hour, she knew. Calamity came shambling in from the pantry at her call, ducking his head by way of obeisance.

"A young gem'man passin' de winder when I's settin' out de table lay it jus' dar," he explained.

"For Mrs. Estemere?"

"No; for de young lady—for you, missy."

"Some one of the gentlemen up at the hotel, I suppose. Which?"

"No, missy; a strange gem'man. I nebber seen him 'fore; shore's I lib. A young, dark-like gem'man."

The flowers dropped out of her hand.

Dacre had heard her remark, then, the evening before. How impertinent, to come to the window! She rose and took hold of the tassel of the shutter-cord. The string caught; it fell with a crash at last. "Don't leave it so again; I am sure it is not safe," she said, and passed on into the little drawing-room to wait for Delphine.

"How nice it was of him!" Mrs. Estemere exclaimed, when Katey had told the story, even to the chance encounter of the night before.

"I think it was impertinent," Katey replied. She remembered him as a boy, with his haughty, supercilious ways. How he had looked down upon and scorned them all then ! That time was as fresh and vivid to her mind as when they lived it. Why had he come now to act a different part ? Circumstances had changed, but they had not changed. Dobry came down with Launce, and they passed out to the breakfast-table. It was Mrs. Estemere, who gathered up the despised flowers at last, put them in water, and set them out in the drawing-room. "Why should it not be ?" she had said to herself, thinking of Katey and Dacre, and looking far into the future with a woman's hasty catching at possibilities.

He had won upon her sympathies,—by no means a difficult matter of attainment, for Delphine was tender-hearted and unsuspicious ; he was undeniably well-born, as we Americans reckon good birth, having had a grandfather of whom it was safe to speak even in polite society. His family had prospered and increased in wealth since the old days in Poplar Street, where their name was remembered now to point more than one story of success ; he had been wild and reckless in his life,—but though she said the words to herself, the blessed innocence of the woman's mind clothed them with but vague meaning,—still he would turn, he would change, and he had only to repent to be received, like the prodigal son, with music and dancing, with feasting and gifts, in his father's house. And when all these results were brought about, what could be more desirable for Katey, who was growing restless under her idle, unaccustomed life, and was planning even so soon to go away and do

for herself. Proud, foolish Katey! who could not take even from Delphine and Jack, dearly as she loved them, what they were only too happy to bestow upon her.

The wind changed towards night. The sky shut down upon the sea, and the fog came driving in, heavy and thick. Down upon the shore the dragon roared and chafed at his chains. The beach was deserted, the cliff bare of strollers, as Katey sprang out of the low phaeton at the door of the cottage, her pretty violet gown drenched, her hair, heavy and damp, falling upon her neck, her arms filled with great creamy lilies. The drive across the country, with the wet wind in her face, had brought a new light to her eyes, a new deep red to her cheeks. "Good night," called Josie Durant, gathering up the reins, and turning the heads of her ponies. Josie's gown, gray and glistening, held its own, despite the fog — her hair, too, bound up tight and smooth, knew no change. Our very outward adorning takes on something of our inner nature, and Josie, calm, unruffled, self-contained, would have passed through a fiery furnace unscathed. So it seemed to poor, foolish, impulsive Katey, who, from gown to heart, reflected every beam of sunshine about her, or was wrapped in every cloud.

Some one rose as she paused in the drawing-room door, her hat, with its wreath of lilies, sliding down to her feet. "Ah!" she gasped. She was not nice for company. That was her first thought. Her hat, in its descent, had caught the comb which held her hair. "Sabrina!" Dacre uttered under his breath. "You remember Dacre, I am sure," was Delphine's more commonplace greeting, trying to put them upon familiar terms at once by this frank use of his name.

Katey answered coldly, bowing formally as she passed on, at which Delphine stared. It is hard when one has arranged a play, and begins to pull the strings, to find that the puppets throw out an arm instead of a foot, or, worse still, turn their backs upon each other. But to Katey it was a charade, in which she was to improvise her own part, only, unfortunately she and Delphine had not chosen the same word. There was an awkward moment, then Dacre excused himself and went away.

"Why did you do so?" said Mrs. Estemere, when he had gone. "Why should you not be kind and pleasant to him?"

"Why should I?" Katey replied, with a jarring chord in her voice; "he was anything but kind and pleasant to us when we were children."

"Good gracious Katey! You don't mean that you have laid anything by to bring up against him after all these years?" Delphine looked at her as though Katey had developed the spirit of a Lucretia Borgia.

"No," Katey replied, slowly. "But I wish he would go away."

"I am afraid that is a very wicked spirit," said Mrs. Estemere, severely. Her quickly devised scheme seemed toppling to the ground already.

"I don't know; I don't wish him any harm, I am sure," Katey replied, in a softer voice. "I should be glad to know he was doing well. But I should prefer it to be a great way off." Then she laughed, bending over Delphine, and giving her a kiss. "It is silly and childish, I know," she added, "and I'll do differently another time, since you wish it."

"Perhaps there will not be another time," replied

Delphine, rather coldly. "His stay is extremely uncertain. He said to-night that he ought to go."

"Then why don't he?" Katey rejoined, quickly. "I'm sure we are not keeping him."

"He has other friends here, I presume."

"Very likely;" and then Katey went on arranging her lilies, and nothing more was said of their visitor.

CHAPTER X.

WHERE MORE IS MEANT THAN MEETS THE EAR.

BUT Dacre did not go. The days passed on, heavy, yet sweet, like the scent of tropical flowers, — idle summer days beside a summer sea, — and Katey met him continually — sometimes as they rolled along the wide, smooth avenue, themselves no insignificant part of the brilliant pageant spread out here upon a bright afternoon; sometimes as they came like mermaids out of the sea; or more often in the twilight, when they sat in unpremeditated state to receive their visitors, enthroned in the bright red chairs upon the veranda. He was always alone. Where are the friends for whom he has staid? Katy thought, wondering not a little over his forlorn appearance. But at sight of them his dark face would brighten for the moment, the cloud of discontent or ill-humor being dispelled by Delphine's cheerful greeting. Katey was still chary of her smiles. He seemed to her like a dark spot upon the beautiful landscape. "I think he is unhappy," Delphine said. But Katey believed that he moped; and to mope when one is young and strong seemed to her the height of folly, if not of sin. Often he lingered for a moment beside them; then she would try to be gracious, remembering her promise to Delphine, but utterly failing in the attempt. Her manners

had not yet hardened into the crust which we all wear later in life. So far, every emotion, every prejudice would show through.

"You do not like me," he said, boldly, one night, finding her upon the veranda alone.

"Why should I?" she replied; then, frightened at herself, she added, quickly, "Why should I not?"

"I commend your wisdom," — and he threw himself down upon the steps at her feet, — "but I wish you would."

He quite forgot the connection between his sentences, as he raised to her the face which appeared almost boyish in the softening light. There was a laugh upon his lips; but the depth and pleading of his eyes gave it the lie.

Katey stared, the warm color flying into her face. This was not at all as the young men she had met were accustomed to address her. "I—I am sure I wish you well," she said, hesitatingly, and with a quaver of embarrassment in her voice. It was a stiff, old-fashioned sentence, and sounded prim and strange in her own ears; but the words were the first which came to her.

"So you do your bitterest enemy, I suppose," he replied. "Only you can have no enemy, I know," he added, gently.

Then Delphine appeared, with a flutter and sweep of soft muslin and lace, and Katey breathed again. But he bent over her hand when he rose to say good night. "We are to be friends; you are not angry?" he asked in a low voice.

"O, no, no," Katey replied, hurriedly, drawing her hand away. What if Delphine should see? Which question had she answered? She hardly knew.

They sat here until the darkness enveloped them and the stars twinkled down ; but Katey did not tell Delphine what had passed between Dacre and herself. And, indeed, was there anything to tell ? But the ice in her heart had begun to melt. What were his boyish pride and superciliousness, that she should have remembered them all these years ? she thought, reproaching herself that night, when she was taking off her ornaments and letting down her hair. Once, during the evening, Dobry had passed the open door with a lamp in her hand ; the flaring rays of light had fallen upon his face. How sad it was ! Katey forgot that she had said he moped, as she gave him a sigh from the depths of her gentle heart. Yes, the ice was beginning to melt.

This marked the commencement of a new order of events. He began now to appear at the cottage at all hours of the day, and some which verged upon the night. He leaned over the sill of the low bay-window, and drank coffee with them in the morning. He ferreted out an old guitar from some dingy shop in the town, and sang quaint, weird songs in the twilight to a low accompaniment, which set strange chords to vibrating in Katey's heart ; he walked, and rode, and bathed in their company ; he became, in more senses than one, Katey's shadow. But she made use of every innocent artifice to avoid meeting him alone. What might he not say ? After that first evening all dreadful possibilities seemed open to him. She had had no experience with lovers. She did not even question in her own mind if it were love he meant, though she was so shy of meeting him ; and yet, after a time, she was conscious of a bond between them.

"You will do this, I know," he said, one day, asking some slight favor, worthless in itself.

"Why will I?" and Katey opened her great eyes upon him.

He bent over the fastening of her glove. "Because—O, I don't know; I wish you would." And she did it.

She was a foolish Katey. So she confessed to herself a little later, when the bond had strengthened more and more, and held her like a chain. Delphine, seeing the play go on after her own heart, rejoiced inwardly, looking farther into the future than Katey, who hardly realized that her feet were snared, so pleasant was the land about her.

"You do not wish him to go away now,—to do well a long way off?" she said, archly, one day. The temptation to triumph over the success of her little scheme was too great, for the moment, to be resisted.

Katey's brown cheek flamed crimson. "I wish—I don't know what I wish."

She rose, hurriedly, and went out of the room. What did Delphine mean? What was it all—the summer, the strange charm, and yet pain, which had stolen into her life? How would it end? For the summer was almost over. Only a few days more, and they would go their several ways—Delphine back to her city home, she to try her own strength, which seemed feeble enough, as the time drew near. Reluctantly, Delphine had given her consent, and Katey had sought and found a position in a school—three hundred miles, at least, from Delphine's home. Even Jack's unwilling sanction had at last been gained. She was to leave before the others. And Dacre? How little she

knew of his life ! Why did she doubt him so at times ? Where would he go ? Should she ever see him again ? As the time drew near when they were to separate, his manner became more and more strange and variable, his moods beyond all comprehension. " I am a wretch, Katey," he said, one day, in so humble and hopeless a tone that Katey's tender heart was touched with pity for the warm-hearted, wayward boy, whom nobody welcomed, as Delphine had said, and whom nobody tried to save. What was the cloud which hung over him ? If she only dared ask ! Could it be that there was something in his past life which he shrank from telling—something which haunted him, and yet of which he could not speak ? To Katey, whose innocent history was like a chained book in an old chapel, the leaves of which any one might turn at will, the thought was too dreadful to be entertained. Who were his friends and associates ? Even Delphine confessed that she had failed to learn. Certainly he had none here save themselves. " But he will go home now," Mrs. Estemere said, to ease her mind of a sharp doubt as to the wisdom of the intimacy she had fostered and encouraged ; " he will go home to his father's house." It was only a few days before that he had spoken of it.

Dacre and Katey strolled on up the narrow streets of the old town. " Yes, I am a wretch," he repeated. It seemed as though he would say more ; but he checked himself.

" One would think you had broken all the commandments." Katey spoke lightly, but there was an anxious tone in her voice.

" I believe I have forgotten what they are," he replied, with a little bitter laugh.

"Don't," said Katey; "it hurts me to hear you speak so."

Some one turned the corner in their faces at that moment—a gentleman, not young, as girls of twenty reckon youth, of medium height, squarely built, with a strong, frank face, shaded on either side by a heavy, red-brown beard. A pair of keen gray eyes, under a heavy forehead, were fastened for an instant upon Katey's pained, anxious face, with its frame of pretty, dark hair and soft, violet ribbons. Ah, he thought, is it so? reading a story in the sweet, girlish countenance, which wore no mask. As his glance passed quickly to Dacre, his forehead gathered into a frown; he almost checked his steps; then he half bowed, and passed on.

Katey, too, had made, involuntarily, a movement to stop. "Who was it?" she asked, startled into forgetfulness of what had gone before. "He recognized you. I thought he was going to speak."

But Dacre had been too much absorbed to notice. "I don't know;" and he looked back, carelessly. "More likely it was you who caught his eye. I only wonder he passed on."

Katey did not smile over the flattery implied in his words. She was lost in thought. She was haunted by the expression of the man's face. Why had he scowled upon Dacre? Delphine said the world had judged him harshly. How or why, Katey had never asked. So the world looked coldly upon him! She had never realized what that could mean until now, when she felt her face grow hot. She laid her hand timidly in his arm. "I believe I am tired," she said, by way of excuse.

His face brightened at once. The unhappy mood vanished like the sudden disappearance of a morning fog. They went on up the tortuous streets and broad, shaded avenues, and he, at least, was gay as though no care or regret had ever rested on him.

He left her at Josie Durant's door. But Josie had gone over to Mrs. Estemere's cottage; so Katey walked slowly home across the lawn, saddened in spite of herself, and full of vague fears. Perhaps it was an old, childish habit revived; perhaps it was one of those strange premonitions which no one can explain; but foremost in her mind at this moment pressed the question, What will Jack say?

As if to answer for himself, he met her face to face as she stepped upon the veranda. He had arrived while she was out. Dear old Jack! The freckles were gone now; the forehead was broad, and whiter than Katey's where the short, dark curls shaded it. The eyes still glinted like sparks of fire. Katey's heart warmed with pride and pleasure at sight of him. He seized and kissed her with affectionate roughness, and drew her through the long, open window, into the pretty little drawing-room, where Delphine sat alone.

"What is this about your going away so soon?" he asked.

"I don't know, only I am going to-morrow," Katey replied.

"Nonsense!" Jack was still chary of words; but there is force as well as wit in brevity.

"So I tell her," Delphine hastened to add; though, in truth, Delphine had never uttered so brief a sentence. "It is a foolish whim; I supposed, of course, she would stay with us until she married."

"But if I shouldn't marry?"

"Everybody marries," Delphine replied, "except women with spheres, and those who are born to be old maids."

"I wonder if Elsie Bird was born to be an old maid," said Katey, thoughtfully. "Delphine, how lovely she was in spirit and in all her ways!"

"Her lover died, I believe," Delphine answered.

Jack had thrown himself into an easy-chair, and lit a cigar; for the cosy little drawing-room was smoking-room as well, unbounded liberty being the rule in Delphine's home.

"For Heaven's sake, Katey," he broke in now, "don't be a woman with a sphere, or I'll disown you."

"I have no desire to be a woman with a sphere," returned Katey, "and I have been very happy with Robert and Delphine, and I should like to come and stay with you and Josie by and by, I am sure, only I should like to do something for myself first. Do let me try it for a little while. Delphine has been too kind. I do nothing but dress, and fold my hands, and try to look pretty, and I believe I am tired of it. I want to do a bit of real hard work, as — as I used to," she added, with a little quaver in her voice, thinking of the old home and the cares which had rested upon the girlish shoulders.

"Well, but why can't you work here?" persisted Jack. "Where are all the fol-de-rols women busy themselves about? Where's your sewing?"

"Delphine puts out our dresses, and the seamstress in the house does the rest. I do sew, just to make myself busy sometimes; and sometimes I arrange the drawing-room, though she says one of the servants could do it as well. Jack," — Katey turned upon him

suddenly,—“how should you like to saw wood, for instance, simply for the sake of doing something, when no one wanted the wood?”

“Wouldn’t do it,” returned Jack. Then removing his cigar, “But some one always does want the wood. You can give it away, you know.”

“Yes,” assented Katey, slowly. “And I could work for charity, I suppose. But—I can’t. I don’t feel called. I don’t know any poor people, and I don’t enjoy societies; I cannot attend meetings—women’s meetings, I mean. Perhaps I am wicked, but I want to laugh always. And as for holding an office—”

“But some one is obliged to,” interrupted Delphine, who was herself vice-president of a benevolent society.

“Yes, I know,” replied Katey, “but they enjoy it. They feel it a duty as well, but they like it. Indeed, that is one sign of a true call to any work, I think; and I haven’t it, Jack—I haven’t it at all.” And Katey, upon the hassock at his feet, clasped her hands around her knees in childish fashion, and turned so sorry a face to him with this confession, that Jack laughed aloud. The idea of Katey sitting gravely in committee, or presiding over a meeting of any kind, was too absurd to be considered.

Delphine, however, viewed the matter more seriously. “But you need not attend societies in order to exercise charity,” she said. “There is Janie Home, who visits regularly the families in the lower part of the village where she has gone to live; sees that their houses and their families are neat, and—”

“What impertinence!” exclaimed Katey. “Think of walking into people’s houses without right or invita-

tion, and advising in family affairs, simply because their doors are narrower and dirtier than ours !”

Jack laughed again.

“It is so; is it not?” Katey went on, appealing to him. “I took Delphine’s place one week last winter, and went with one of her friends down through the back streets of the town as a visiting committee. We were to ring each bell, and call upon every family if possible, find out if they attended church, and if their children were in Sunday school. I don’t know how the others proceeded, but I apologized at every door for the intrusion, and felt that it was only natural and just, when a tall, raw-boned woman barred our entrance to one house, and said, with a kind of enraged self-respect, ‘An’ what if I don’t, miss?’ in answer to our question.”

“But you should not have done so,” said Mrs. Estemere. “I always make some excuse, or ask permission to go in. Then I speak to the children, give them candy, and if there is a pot of flowers or a print to ornament the room, notice that, and so gradually approach the object of my visit.”

“But Delphine, dear, what if a stranger should walk into your drawing-room, admire Launce, feed him with chocolate-creams, which you know always make him ill, criticise your *Gérôme*, comment upon the weather, and crown all with a modest hope that you were using these blessings without abusing them, and were fitting yourself for another and better world, saying that it was to express this hope she had called ! I am sure you would ask the servant to show her the door.”

“But that is different,” laughed Delphine. “They do not often resent our visits.”

"Then they can have no self-respect," persisted Katey.

Delphine shook her head. "It may be so sometimes," she said, "but we often find poor, forlorn, broken-spirited creatures, who are only too glad to hear a kind word from any one."

"Yes, perhaps so," assented Katey, slowly, remembering at least one such experience of her own.

"I shall yet boast of my sister, who is laboring among the heathen," laughed Jack, pinching Katey's ear.

"O, never," she replied, gravely. "I am not good enough, and I am ashamed to say I do not feel drawn towards the heathen—that is, foreign heathen," she added, remembering Dacre. "I am only a little restless and proud," she went on, with a laugh. "I want to do something for myself. So Robert and Delphine say I may try. I wrote you about the advertisement, and Robert went to La Fayette to see the school, and use his influence to gain the position for me. I am engaged to teach the younger children, and I go tomorrow," she concluded, with a quick gasp, which might have been due to breathlessness after her hurried speech, or fright at the prospect so near.

"You are not fit to take care of yourself," was Jack's final comment. "You'll do something foolish or unheard of away off there."

"O, no," said Katey, quickly. She was much more likely to do so if she remained here, she thought. What would he say if he knew about Dacre Home? If she only dared tell him! And yet, what was there to tell?

Delphine mentioned Dacre's name casually as they

were going out to tea. "What is he doing here?" said Jack, sharply, making Katey's heart cease to beat for the moment. O, how thankful she was that he had not come before! Or did she wish that Delphine and she had never been left to themselves?

Josie Durant, who had staid to tea, gave her a sharp little glance as Jack uttered the question, to which no one replied. Launce, hanging upon his mother's chair, would have spoken, but Delphine checked him. This was not the time to open the subject, she saw, and she let it pass.

Katey felt Josie's glance as she bent over her plate. Josie's clear little head had taken in everything,—Delphine's scheme, Katey's doubt and hesitation, and surrender at last,—though there had been no confidence between Katey and herself. How could there be when there was no sympathy? Miss Durant had disapproved of it all from the first. She would have interfered if she had dared; but she was not yet one of the family, and how could she set herself in opposition to Delphine, or act the part of a tale-bearer, and write to Jack?

There was to be a gathering of their summer friends at the Durants' that evening, too informal to be called a party, though there would be music and dancing, and Josie had offered to return and spend the night with Katey, who chafed against it all—this last evening! And Dacre would not be at the party. All through the summer Miss Durant had quietly ignored him. He had received no invitation, Katey knew, and she had said nothing to him of the engagement for the evening. Should she see him again? The train she was to take left at an early hour in the morning—

almost at daybreak. Even if he came to the cottage to-night, it might be only to find her gone, or, more dreadful still, to meet Jack face to face. It was a relief to see Jack cross the lawn with Josie while she still lingered over her toilet. Delphine followed them presently. "You will come over soon, I suppose," she called to Katey; "I have promised Josie to help her arrange some flowers." She had marked Katey's nervous manner, and divined something of the truth. She quaked inwardly, remembering the tone of Jack's voice when she had mentioned Dacre's name; but it was too late to go back now. She would give them one more chance to meet, and she hastened over to the Durants' cottage strong in the determination to keep Jack well employed for the next hour, so that he should have no opportunity to return for Katey.

CHAPTER XI.

PITY'S AKIN TO LOVE.

THE pale violet ribbons had been laid aside ; but the scarlet geraniums in her hair were not more vivid than the red on Katey's cheek, as she stood, fluttering and faint-hearted, just within the open window, when they had all gone, listening to every step upon the gravel before the door. Perhaps he would not come. It would be better for her, she knew, if he never came again. A spasm of sense and reason had seized her in the midst of the excitement of the moment. And yet she waited.

He came at last. She ran down the stairs to meet him. He must not stay. It would not do for Jack to return and find him here — Jack, who was hot-headed and rash, and would say — she knew not what. Dacre had heard nothing of his arrival. She told him now, as they stood in the doorway, showing all her apprehension in her face as she made the announcement, with a fearful glance over the way, where a soft light shone from the open windows through the closed shutters. The high, wide veranda was peopled with moving shadows already. The first strains of the music rose upon the still air, mingling with the gentle sweep and fall of the surf over the deserted sands.

“ I must go,” Katey said, at last. “ There is com-

pany at the other house ; they will miss me." She offered no excuse for his having been left out. They had reached a point beyond conventionalities.

He walked beside her, across to the other cottage. They passed the broad flight of steps leading up to the veranda, and reached the side door in silence. Katey held out her hand. It was to be like the parting of ordinary acquaintances, then ? What had she expected ? What had she hoped for ? It was better so ; yet something in her throat choked the words she tried to say. All the past summer, bewildering and sweet, rose before her at that moment. Where would he go, from her, and to whom ? She felt, as they stood that one instant with clasped hands in the soft darkness, the laughing voices coming out to them through the closed shutters, — they two alone — that, beyond the shadows enveloping them, an awful gulf yawned and waited for him. O, if she could but hold him back !

He bent his head as she stood above him, and laid his cheek upon her hand. So like a boy he was ! Would nobody try to save him ?

"It is only 'good by,' Katey ;" and there was a strange, hoarse tone in his voice. "I like you too well to say anything else. I ought to have gone before ; I knew it all the time."

His lips touched her hand. Then she was alone.

"*Dacre !*" Her voice, shrill and sharp, rang out into the night. In a moment he was beside her. "O, where are you going ? What will become of you ?"

She had forgotten the open windows. Some one pulled up a blind. "I thought I heard a cry," said a voice. He drew her into the shadow of the door.

way as Josie Durant leaned out to listen. "It is nothing," Miss Durant said, calmly, addressing some one behind her, and dropping the blind noisily. But Katey knew that she had seen them.

There was a general movement within. It was only the cessation of the momentary stillness, but to Katey the voices drew near. "They are coming; I must go," she exclaimed in a frightened whisper.

He caught her in his arms. "Katey! Katey! I shall come to you—I shall see you!" Then he was gone.

The music had begun again when she entered the drawing-room. They were forming a set upon the veranda. "Where did you hide yourself?" asked Jack, leading her out; "or have you but just come? I was going over to look you up, but Delphine thought you must be here somewhere."

Fortunately there was a flourish of trumpets at this moment; the dance had begun, and, in following its mazes, with a lugubrious air, droll to see, Jack—who still hated parties and everything pertaining to them—forgot his question. It was a long, tiresome evening to Katey, in spite of the music, the pleasant, softly-lighted rooms, and cheerful company. She stole away at last to the shelter of a deep window. Here, with her elbow upon the sill, her cheek in her hand, her face turned towards the sea, across which streamed a faint line of light from the white moon overhead, she dreamed her dream undisturbed. "Katey! Katey!" she heard again, above the gay voices floating in upon her, above the hushed roar of the surf which filled in every pause. O, she would trust him!—forgetting that the truest trust is involuntary.

Josie sought her out. "What are you doing here?" she said. "Do try and rouse yourself, Katey. What will people think? That strange gentleman has been staring at you for the last ten minutes."

"Who is he?" and Katey forgot her momentary resentment at Josie's tone, to stare in turn after the broad, square figure vanishing through the doorway. She had caught a glimpse of a red-brown beard, and a pair of deep-set gray eyes. Where had she seen them before? Then she remembered. It was the gentleman who had recognized Dacre Home upon the street that afternoon.

"I don't know," Josie answered, carelessly. "Some friend of the Fosters, I believe. I have forgotten his name. But I must go; I have to sing."

The Fosters were already making their adieus when they returned to the drawing-room. Once more Katey felt the searching eyes fixed upon her, as their owner, behind Mrs. Foster's broad shoulders, awaited his turn. It almost seemed as though he would speak to her. A shadow of irresolution crossed his face; he turned to Miss Durant; but Katey had moved away, something very hot and fierce rising within her at the recollection of the scowl he had bestowed upon Dacre. When she looked again the whole party had left the room.

Jack took her home before the company finally broke up, and Delphine soon followed. Josie came later, mounting the stairs with a slow step, which set Katey's heart to beating with apprehension. She had watched the lights go out over the way after the last guest had departed. She had seen the musicians with their queer, distorted burdens, steal

out like robbers, and vanish among the trees. Even Jack had crossed the lawn, and the odor of his cigar came up to her now from below. She had watched them all through the parted curtains, hoping, yet hardly daring to hope, that Josie would not come, after all. But Josie, it seemed, had only lingered to make some change in her dress. She came in now, as Katey stood before the glass brushing out her hair, a little white sacque tied by the sleeves loosely about her neck, her arms, with their pretty cream tint, bare and raised above her head, as she went on without turning from the glass, shaking out the heavy braids into shining waves, which fell over her shoulders and about her face.

"Well, Katey?" and Josie threw back the little shawl wrapped around her, and settled herself in an arm-chair with a judicial air. She did not intend to appear severe; she even tried to make her tone gentle and conciliatory; but she had failed, she knew as soon as the words passed her lips.

"Is it about Dacre?" Katey's eyes were very bright and full as she faced her friend.

"Or say for thee I'll die — or say for thee I'll die!"

sang some half-drunken reveller, strolling up from the cliff. "I can't tell you," she went on; "don't ask me, please." She had made up her mind while Josie was slowly mounting the stairs. She could not deny what her friend had seen with her own eyes, and yet what was there to acknowledge?

"O, very well," Josie replied, coldly. "Of course I don't wish to force your confidence."

"But don't look at me so," cried poor Katey, who

desired, like the most of us, to be trusted, even though blindly. She stooped suddenly, and kissed her friend. But Miss Durant had little appreciation of enigmas, and none whatever of impulsive ways. Her gentle emotions were all reducible, and could be explained upon fixed principles. "I don't understand you;" and she moved away from Katey's caress, speaking as though it were a matter of surprise that she did not, — the surprise always awakened in people by new developments in the friends they have weighed and passed judgment upon, — a surprise not unmingled with displeasure, as though an unfair advantage had been taken of them by these untimely revelations. But Katey did not think it strange. She by no means understood herself. Her mind, so far, seemed made up of questions which later years would, perhaps, answer.

"I think you might trust me," she said, slowly.

"Why, how can I when you tell me nothing?" exclaimed Miss Durant.

"That wouldn't be trusting; that would be knowing," Katey replied. Then she went on brushing out her hair, and preparing for the night, and nothing more was said. She wondered if Josie would tell Jack; but she would not ask. To do so would appear as though she were afraid or ashamed.

The next morning, when she leaned out from the window of the railway car to exchange last words with her friends, her eyes were searching the dusky length of the great, dark station, imagining every dimly-defined form to be that of Dacre. He might be very near, if she did but know it. He might even be in the seat before her. For in the darkness no

one could recognize his neighbor, and the shooting out of the train presently into the light of day would be like unmasking at a ball. It was a dull, wet day. The rain dripped outside and overhead upon the dingy panes of glass far up in the mammoth roof. She could not hear it for the shrieking of the trains and the hurried tread of passing feet; but the figures huddled together in the dim light, half hidden by the cloud of smoke and vapor, which, settling down, added to the gloom of the place, were wrapped against the chill and wet out of all individuality.

Katey watched them with something more than idle curiosity as they darted hither and thither, pressing in turn close to the windows of the car, discerning friends by some subtle intuition, rather than by the exercise of the outward senses; then, falling back, to stand motionless, a solid phalanx, as the train moved slowly out and away. There were a few dim lights burning through the cars; some had flickered and gone out; but one still shone brightly over Katey's head, bringing out, like a picture in strong colors, the slight figure bent towards the window, wrapped in a little bright shawl, the mass of dark hair pushed back, the absorbed, questioning eyes; and it threw a line of light across the faces being left slowly behind, making strange, unexpected revelations in the countenances whose owners believed them hidden still by the darkness—the inner thought creeping out. And there were people who had bade their friends adieu in mock sorrow, being really glad for them to go, and the gladness showed now. And there was a lover, who had not dared say all he wished to his mistress at

parting; but she might read it in his face now if she would only look. And there were sorrow, and disappointment, and even anger, if Katey could have read them all. But she searched for Dacre alone. He was not there, nor in the train when they had moved out into the dull daylight, and were speeding on their way. She was doubly sure when an hour had passed, and still he did not appear; and with a sense, if not of relief, at least of cessation of the strain of eager, painful expectation, she curled herself into the corner of the seat she shared with no one, and prepared to take the rest she needed so greatly. She might doze through all the long day, if she chose; it would be late in the afternoon before they reached the junction where she was to change cars for La Fayette. So, with every tense nerve relaxed, and her cheek pillowed upon the little red shawl, she sank into a profound sleep.

CHAPTER XII.

NEW ACQUAINTANCES.

SHE awoke after an hour or two, rested and refreshed, and, still lying back in her corner, began to scan the passengers within the range of her vision with the curious eyes of one who has seen little of the world. They were all uninteresting, even to her active fancy, with the exception of a party just before her, and a jimmer-jawed woman in a black bonnet, over the way, who had come from New Hampshire alone, and was pouring the story of her troubles in regard to some error in her ticket, as well as various side issues, into the sympathizing ear of a questionable-looking young man, who occupied the seat before her. Various bits of this confidence floated into Katey's ears, as well as the amused "Just so, just so, ma'am," of the young man. The woman had a flurried, nervous manner, and grasped with both hands a very large paper parcel lying in her lap; but though her story went on, in a shrill, penetrating voice, without cessation, she yet eyes had and ears for everything about her, and was constantly being overcome with gratitude for what she considered personal favors. "No, I thank you, my dear;" to the itinerant ice-water boy. "But how very kind it was of him to think of it!" she soliloquized. She apologized to the vender

of books for not buying his wares, assuring him that they looked "very pretty, but, you see, I don't find much time to read, any way, and I expect to be tolerably busy where I am going." She exhausted the patience of the meek-faced conductor by her repeated questions, assuring him, at the end of each colloquy, that she had travelled all the way from New Hampshire alone. There came a change, however; the meek-faced conductor disappeared at some cross-road, and an official of enormous proportions and a decidedly military air took his place. He slammed the door after him, as he entered the car, with the mildness of a clap of thunder. He ejaculated, "Tickets!" like a startling sneeze. Every sleepy eye opened wide. Every hand involuntarily grasped its bit of pasteboard, offering it abjectly at his approach. Not so the jimber-jawed woman. She raised her voice above the noise of the train as he drew near, and began her story: —

"I've come all the way from —"

He seized her ticket, gave it a violent and vicious punch, thrust it into her hand again, and was half way down the aisle before she had succeeded in uttering, "New Hampshire."

"Well!" She stared after him in a bewildered way, straightening the black bonnet, which had become displaced as though it had shrunk back of its own accord at the approach of this awful personage. But she was neither discouraged nor dismayed. She bided her time. He came again. There was a perceptible hush throughout the car, a spasmodic clutching of tickets at that resounding slam of the door. Then the jimber-jawed woman rose and leaned forward, a feeble simpser called up by some instinct of feminine con-

sciousness spreading over her countenance. "Snap, snap:" the Great Mogul drew near. She opened her mouth as he turned towards her with an outstretched, impatient hand. "I've come all the way —" Suddenly he seemed to swell and fill the place. His face was awful to contemplate. He raised one finger. "Sit down!" he ejaculated, in a voice of thunder; and a confused heap of black bonnet and brown paper parcel dropped speechless upon the seat. The jimmer-jawed woman was conscious of the real presence at last.

There was a hastily suppressed laugh just before her, and Katey, turning her face quickly, was struck by a pair of bright eyes, as well as by the odd appearance of the whole party, who had, from the first, attracted her attention, and aroused her curiosity.

They were four in all; a father, son, and two daughters, she judged, from a certain resemblance among them. There was a similarity as well in their rather fantastic attire; in which short, braided jackets and knee-breeches upon the men, with deep, pointed collars and a profusion of flowing hair, were most conspicuous. The costume of the two girls — one of whom was extremely delicate in appearance — was not less singular. Their bright blue jackets were more elaborately braided than were those of their father and brother, which were of a coarser fabric. Their short black petticoats just revealed the neat little boots, oddly laced over bright red stockings, and their long, abundant hair was braided, and hung down in a simple fashion, obsolete enough to have been remarked a dozen years ago.

The whole party wore queer, high-pointed hats,

from each of which hung a variegated cord and tassel, and attracted naturally not a little attention. The dreadful conductor alone gave them no second glance.

There was something singularly open and winning in their faces, especially in that of the sick girl, who had removed her hat, and lay back upon a pillow improvised from cloaks and wraps, tenderly, almost anxiously, watched over by the others.

Katey wondered at their strange appearance. Who and what were they? Play-actors, perhaps; but certainly no play-actors ever travelled about in so strange a garb. Her curiosity increased as the day wore away and they neared the junction where she was to change cars and leave her odd companions. But no; they, too, were gathering up wraps and parcels as the last station before the junction was passed. There was a movement throughout the car — the rising and stretching of benumbed forms, the hasty gathering of detached belongings, the bustle of near departure or change; even the jimbered-jawed woman had recovered speech again, and Katey had folded the little red shawl over her arm, and replaced the book in her satchel, which she had been too idle to read, when all at once there came a strange, jarring shock, throwing those already upon their feet to their seats again, followed by what would have been utter suspension of sound or motion but for the exclamations and confusion suddenly awakened. Katey, recovering herself as the crowd pressed by, spoke aloud involuntarily: "O, what is it? What has happened?"

"There is no occasion for alarm."

It was the little old gentleman in the high-pointed hat who answered her. He was raising the sick girl

in his arms. He bore her out, followed by the others of the family, with whom Katey found herself.

"She has fainted," he said, laying his charge down tenderly in the shadow of the high bank beside the road. But even as he spoke the sick girl opened her eyes and smiled upon Katey, who was bending over her. "It is nothing; do not be alarmed," she said, in a gentle voice, which quite won Katey's heart.

The young man of the odd party had followed the crowd up the road. He came back now to say that there had been a slight accident, which would probably detain them for an hour or two, or until assistance should arrive from the junction.

"We are to stop there," volunteered the bright-eyed girl, who was holding her sister's hands in her own.

"Yes; we sing there to-night," the little old gentleman added.

"O," Katey said, wondering more and more, especially as a dim recollection or some fancied resemblance flitted through her mind, making all at once the strange company strangely familiar. She sat down beside the two girls, to await the tardy progress of events and the slow process of deliverance. This moment of fright and mutual helpfulness had drawn them together as such times will the most incongruous elements, until when the train, having arrived at last from the junction, moved off, she still formed one of the odd group who would, at another time, have attracted no little attention, but were now scarcely noticed in the general excitement.

"You will pardon me, young lady," said the little old gentleman, with quaint formality, "for not having

properly introduced myself and my family ; but the occasion is unusual, to say the least," — to which Katey assented.

" These are my children," he went on, with the air of presenting them to an audience ; indeed, there was something histrionic in all the little old gentleman's speech and manner, as though he had been accustomed to bestow much care upon both.

Katey murmured something of having imagined as much, as an affectionate smile was exchanged between the father and his family.

" You recognize us, perhaps ? "

She was obliged to own that she did not.

" Ah ! " said the little old man, with an air of astonishment. Then opening his arms as though by this gesture he were revealing himself to the world, " We are the Hauser family ! "

If the little old man had announced his party as the lost Ten Tribes, or the last of the Huggermuggers, he could not have displayed a prouder or more self-satisfied countenance.

A light burst upon Katey's mind. She had seen the name in staring letters, and even the oddly-costumed figures pictured upon posters in the town where Delphine resided, though their simple programme had tempted neither Delphine nor herself to hear them.

" O, yes ; I remember now," she said, really interested ; " but I have never heard you sing."

" No ? " The surprise in the little old man's face made his eyes for the moment quite round. He hastily searched in his pockets, and brought out at last a package of tickets, soiled and broken ; choosing the most presentable, he gave it into Katey's hand.

"That will admit you and a friend. Yes," examining it carefully to see that there was no mistake, "you and a friend to any concert we may chance to give at any time in your life in any city of the world."

Katey hesitated about placing herself under so tremendous an obligation. But the little old man insisted. "Perhaps you will favor our poor performance with your presence this evening, if you remain at the junction."

"O, thank you;" she replied, "I should be happy to do so; but I shall not stay there—that is, I don't know what I am to do. My name is Earle—Katherine Earle," she added, remembering that she had failed to accomplish her part of the introduction, "and I was to have gone on to La Fayette to-night. Do you think I have missed the train?"

"I should say so, certainly;" and at that moment the train rushed into the station. Immediately all was confusion about them. "I am sure I don't know what I can do," began Katey, bewildered.

There was a whispered consultation among her new friends. "At least I must leave the cars," she thought, gathering up her belongings. Some one touched her arm. It was the little old man. "If you would come with us, if you would not mind the—the publicity which naturally attends our movements, we could show you an inn close by; not the finest one in the village, but perfectly respectable and neat. We have been there often before. The host and hostess are old friends. You hesitate? That is quite right; it is not safe to trust a stranger, as I tell my daughters."

"But she may trust *you*," said the bright-eyed girl,

warmly, while Katey tried to protest that it was not from distrust she had hesitated.

"How does she know it?" laughed the little old man. "And, first, you wish to find out about your train. Suppose you go into the station and inquire for yourself. That will be most satisfactory. The ticket-master will tell you; and you can ask about the Lion Inn at the same time. We will wait for you; or, since Christine is so weak and tired, I will go on with her, and Mina and Wulf will stay here until you return;" and the kind little old gentleman moved off slowly with the sick girl.

Katey acted upon his suggestion, and found that the train for La Fayette had indeed gone. There would be no other until midnight; and when the ticket-agent had also corroborated the statement in regard to the Lion Inn, which was kept, he said, by a German family, but was neat and well spoken of, she decided to remain in the village until morning. It would certainly be preferable to reaching La Fayette at day-break, with the chance of not being expected at that hour.

So she crossed the open "green," or grassy square of the village, with her odd companions, to the low inn, with its encircling piazza, and a flaming sign of a ferocious lion swinging before the door. The piazza, and even the hall, with its combined odors of smoke, and beer, and departed dinners, seemed quite deserted; but bright-eyed Mina pushed on to a door at the end of the passage opening into what seemed to be the family room, where a very old lady sat knitting in one corner, while a couple of little girls, with their thick, dark locks braided tightly, and bound around their

heads, played upon the floor at her feet. They sprang up with an exclamation at sight of Mina, and raised their rosy faces to kiss her warmly. Even the old lady rose smiling to greet her. "And how do you do, Wulf?" to the flaxen-haired young man, who seemed stiff and constrained in Katey's presence. Then she looked inquiringly at Katey.

"It is a young lady who was going on to La Fayette; the accident detained her. But where is Mrs. Sheppart, and what has become of Christine?"

"You will find them in the great front room," the old lady replied. "Poor Christine seems quite feeble."

"She is not well;" and Mina's face was clouded for a moment. "And the fright to-day has made her more ill than usual. I think we will go and find her," she added, to Katey.

Christine was lying upon the great high-posted bed in the long, low, and rather barely furnished chamber to which they had been directed, while the hostess, a smiling, black-eyed woman, with her shining hair braided and tightly wound around her head like that of her little daughters, moved about the room, closing the shutters, re-arranging and dusting the furniture, with a bustling, cheerful air. "O, Mina!" she exclaimed, as the door opened, coming forward and holding out her round, smooth cheeks for Mina's hearty kisses. "And this is the young lady Christine has been telling me of;" her manner changing at sight of Katey's tall and rather stately figure. "We will try to make you comfortable, miss, but the house is likely to be full—" She hesitated. Katey was evidently out of the line of her usual patrons.

"I am sure I shall be comfortable," Katey hastened to say.

"I may have to put up a cot for you here." Mina looked at Katey, who glanced towards Christine.

"O, it will not annoy Christine — will it, dear?" Mina said, quickly.

Christine smiled and shook her head.

"Then I should much prefer it," said Katey.

"It would be so much nicer to be together!" added Mina, removing her hat, shaking the dust from her skirts, and performing a pirouette.

"Come, come," interrupted Mrs. Sheppart, seizing Mina in her arms. "Christine must go to sleep, or she will be fit for nothing this evening. Perhaps you and the young lady would come down to the parlor. I will open it for you;" and with one last motherly arranging of the sick girl's pillows, she left the room.

Mina and Katey followed her to the little parlor at the foot of the stairs, with its staring ingrain carpet, and line of stiff, black chairs ranged against the wall. Katey consigned herself to the cold charities of the hair-cloth sofa, while Mina pushed open the shutters, and let the light strike upon the great portraits covering the walls. There were the inn-keeper, his two sons, his wife, his wife's mother, and the two little girls, all staring down from very dark, wide, wooden frames, and very dark, gloomy backgrounds, out of exceedingly surprised eyes. The women, portrayed in very tight black silk dresses, had a nipped, shrunken appearance, which was quite made up, however, by that of the men, who seemed, in their fullness, liable, at any moment, to burst from the canvas, and step down in their own proper persons. The effect, when the light was let into the room, was as though the place had been suddenly peopled.

"Yes," said Mina, watching Katey's startled face; "it is as if they had all rushed to a funeral; is it not? But I never tell Mrs. Sheppart so. She likes them. They were painted by an artist who staid here one summer — to pay his bill, I think. But this is best of all." She opened a door at the farther end of the room, put her head out cautiously, and then beckoned to Katey. "The men have not come back," she said, leading the way into the bar-room. A kitchen-maid had been left in temporary charge of the place. She was leaning across the bar so as to bring her eyes within range of the open door. At their appearance she began vigorously to polish a glass with her apron. Over her head hung the picture. The face was that of the host, round, rubicund, overflowing with good nature, his head surmounted by a gilded crown, a crimson robe, edged with ermine, covering his shoulders, and in his hand, not a sceptre, but a brimming, foaming glass of ale.

"Old King Cole!" exclaimed Katey.

"But it is much more like Mr. Sheppart than the one in the parlor," said Mina.

There was the grinding of heavy feet upon the piazza outside, and the girls retreated hastily. The hostess was just entering the little parlor from the other door.

"I thought, perhaps, you would prefer to take your tea by yourselves," she said. "You will have more time to dress," she added to Mina. "So you may come out now."

"That will be nice; thank you," said Mina. "I don't mind, of course; I have been here so many times," she went on, as Mrs. Sheppart hastened away, leaving them to follow more leisurely. "And then I

know the family. But you are not accustomed to be stared at."

"And are you?" Katey was amused at the girl's frank manner of speech.

Mina laughed. "O, yes; I have sung and travelled about from one place to another ever since I can remember. You don't mind if the sticks and stones in the street stare at you?"

"No; but one does not credit them with eyes."

"Nor do people seem to have eyes after a time. You don't think anything about it. You don't care for them at all;" and then Mina led the way to the dining-room.

CHAPTER XIII.

CAP AND BELLS.

THE sick girl did not come down to tea; and after a consultation by her bedside, her father and brother decided that she was quite unfit to take part in the evening's entertainment.

"It is too bad," said Mina, when, a little later, she and Katey had returned to the chamber. Mina was sitting upon the floor before a small trunk, which had evidently seen good service, shaking out a little red skirt, in which she was to appear at the concert. "I would sing all your songs if you would only go; but you cannot, I know," she added, with a sigh, as she laid back in the trunk the duplicate of the red petticoat.

She was silent and thoughtful as she braided her smooth, dark hair anew, tying the thick plaits with scarlet ribbons; then suddenly she turned to Katey: "But *you* might go in Christine's place."

Katey shrank back from leaning upon Mina's dressing table and watching the deft fingers.

"Don't say that you won't," Mina went on; "you need not sing. You could wear Christine's dress, and we never take off our hats. You have no friends here to recognize you; and what if you had?" she added, proudly. "You could stand back a little when we all

rise together; and O, I should be so glad not to go alone with father and Wulf! I believe, after all, I should mind being stared at with Christine not beside me."

Katey was startled by the proposition, which, at the first moment, appeared too absurd to be entertained. But as Mina used every argument in her power, she began at last to waver, moved more by what had been left unsaid, perhaps, than by Mina's warm pleading. She was indebted to these strange friends of an hour, without whom she hardly knew where she should have been now, so little confidence in herself, and so little experience in travelling, did she possess. She would gladly oblige bright-eyed Mina, if she could; and it was true that no one who had ever known her could, by any chance, be found in the audience. Her friends and acquaintances were not many, nor were they given to wandering; it would be an odd coincidence indeed that should bring them here this night. Dacre might follow her to La Fayette; but he was not upon the train which had brought her here, or he would have appeared to her before now. The little red skirt, the laced black bodice, the dainty white chemisette which Christine was to have worn, would fit her form as well, and perhaps the spice of adventure in the plan, when it was once entertained, brought a certain charm and intoxication of its own. Such an innocent bit of masquerading as it would be! Only, how could she ever face the staring eyes!

"I could not stand before the people," she said, hesitatingly.

"You will not think of them at all," Mina answered, in a gay tone, sure that her point was

gained. "I will hide you ; and, indeed, as I am to sing all the songs, you must not be surprised if I take all the attention and applause to myself," she added, with a laugh.

"I hope so, indeed," Katey answered, warmly.

She unbound her hair at Mina's suggestion, and began to plait it into braids, while the latter ran down to find her father and Wulf, without whose approval, of course, the scheme was not to be thought of. They were only too glad of this unexpected addition to their small company, and the dressing for the part went on in the long, low chamber, Christine an interested and delighted spectator. The black bodice was laced snugly to the round figure, the red petticoat allowed the shapely feet to be seen, and Mina crowned the whole with the high-pointed hat, around which she had knotted a gilt cord.

"Look, Christine !" cried Mina ; and Christine laughed and praised the transformed figure, while Mina danced and clapped her hands, ending the performance with a hearty kiss upon each of Katey's dark, flushed cheeks. "You were a grand young lady before," she said, "but you are one of us now ;" and with that change of individuality which seems often to accompany a change of costume, making it comparatively easy to act a part when one is dressed for it, Katey felt that she was indeed, for the time, a part of the odd family. What would Jack say to it all ? she thought, as she followed Mina, at last, to the little parlor.

"You are not really Swiss ?" she said, when they had closed the door and sat down to wait for the little old man and his son, who were still at the supper table.

If she were one of the family, it behooved her to know something of its antecedents.

"Father and mother were born in Switzerland," Mina replied, "in a village not far from Lake Constance. They came to this country soon after they were married. Father hurt his arm, and could not work, when Wulf was a baby; so he tried to sing for a living. It was all he could do; and mother had a wonderful voice, they say, though I never heard it, for she died when I was born. They sang in the street at first, but the people all seemed too hurried and busy to stop and listen; so, after a time, when they had earned a little money by different ways, they ventured to give a concert in the public hall of some country town. Father had learned American ways by this time, and he had some bills printed, with a picture upon them of himself in the Tyrolese dress, with snow-covered mountains behind him, and holding a long Alpine horn in his hand. Not that he was from the Tyrol at all; but the costume is striking, and it certainly was effective, for the hall was full, and the concert a great success. Mother, too, wore the strange dress, and even Wulf, when he was old enough to appear, and then Christine and I."

"It is very striking, as you say," ventured Katey, "and for that reason I should think you would prefer to wear it only when you sing."

"So we should," Mina replied; "but don't you see, if we dressed like every one else, people would never come to hear us; we don't sing well enough — no one of us, at least, except Christine, sings well enough to attract them. It is because we look always and everywhere strange, and not like themselves at all, that the

people in the round of places where we go have a kind of curiosity and interest in us, which does much to draw them to our concerts, I am sure. And we don't feel that we are deceiving them, because deep down in our hearts we are Swiss,—even Wulf, and Christine, and I, who were never in Switzerland. Do you know,"—and the face of the girl kindled and glowed,—“when Christine and I stand up before the people, and sing, as we do so many times, a little old song beginning,—

‘I’ve left the snow-clad hills,
Where my father’s cot doth stand,
My own, my dear, my native home,
For a foreign land,’—

when we look sadly into each other’s eyes, as father taught us to do when we were little children, often and often the tears have come to mine. I see it all before me—the cottage where my mother was born, with the vines growing over it; the sloping green hills descending to the valley, where shone a little lake; the mountains beyond, with their white faces laid against heaven. And I hear, O, above the song we are singing, the tinkle of the bells as the goats come slowly home; in the twilight, to the milking. I may never see it; but, if I could follow the path up the valley from the village, I should know the place, I am sure.”

She was silent for a moment, and lost in her dream; then she came back to Katey’s words.

“We did try it once. When Christine grew to be a young lady, she was ashamed of the dress which strangers stared at; so, to please her, father allowed

us to lay it aside. But our concerts were poorly attended; still, for Christine's sake he persisted. He found a blind man who played the guitar, and hired him to join us, thinking he might attract the public."

"And did he?" asked Katey.

"No; for the guitar could never be heard beyond the fifth row of seats, unless it snapped a string; and he might as well not have been blind for all the benefit it was to us; nobody would believe it. He rolled his eyes and stared at the audience, and winked and turned his head in the most provoking way, considering the care and expense he was to us. Father tried to persuade him to shut his eyes, and offered to buy him a dog, to lead him by a string, to convince people; but he wouldn't listen to it at all. He went on with his ridiculous antics, and all the time finding fault that we did not pay him more, when we were earning hardly enough to put bread into our mouths, until we were glad to be rid of him. Then the proprietor of a monkey show wanted to hire us to go about with that; but, though his offer was a very good one, father would not accept it. Some time before this, Wulf had an opportunity to take lessons upon the bass-viol. It was wonderful to hear him," she added, with sisterly pride; "but, though he had learned to play well enough to perform in public, a bass-viol alone wouldn't attract an audience — would it?"

Katey felt hardly competent to judge; still, she thought it would not.

"So he left us, to play in the orchestra of a theatre that winter," Mina went on, "and Christine had a very good offer to travel with a Bible panorama. She had

only to wear a plain white dress, let her hair down, and sing solemn pieces while they were moving it along. I believe that Bible panorama never had such a success before or since. Still father was sorry afterwards that he consented to her going."

Mina's words had fairly overlapped each other in the eagerness of her recital; now she hesitated.

"But I will tell you," she continued, "because it troubled us all, and because I like you. I never had a girl friend before; we stay so short a time in any place, and father is so careful about our making acquaintances. Perhaps you don't wish me to reckon you as a friend?"

Mina blushed, and searched Katey's face with shy anxiety.

"O, yes, I do. I do, indeed," Katey answered, warmly. "And I am glad to know of your life, if you will tell me."

"Well," Mina went on, "winter was coming, and we had none of us any engagement except Wulf, and his earnings would not support us all, when Christine had, unexpectedly, this good offer. Father inquired, and found that the man who owned the Bible panorama was very respectable, and his wife was to travel with him; so, although we had never been separated before, and he could hardly make up his mind to it now, he consented at last to let her go. And she has never been herself since."

Mina paused to brush the tears out of her eyes before she went on.

"She was always sweet-faced, was Christine."

"And so she is now," said Katey.

"Yes; but she was rosier, brighter, then; and yet

there was something in her eyes, not like a pain, but as though you could imagine how they would look if ever the pain came. I saw her the first night she appeared with the panorama; and when she stood there, the walls and towers of Jerusalem rising behind her, with her long, fair hair falling about her shoulders, her hands crossed upon the bosom of the white gown, and her eyes gazing away beyond us while she sang, I sobbed so that father had to take me out. It seemed as though it were the new Jerusalem, and she a saint in glory. She sang all that winter in one place and another. She had always a sweet voice, with a tone in it like the look in her eyes. We used to hear from her often, and see her occasionally, and she seemed bright and happy. But when the spring came, and she returned to us, there was a change. For a long time we did not know what it was, only there was a change. After a time it all came out; for Christine could never hide anything in her soul from us. It seemed a young man had followed her, through the winter, from place to place, until he stole her heart. Yes, stole it," Mina repeated, excitedly, "for he never came boldly to our father, as he ought to have done; he never came to him at all until long after her return, when he found he could see her in no other way. Where he ever saw her first I can't think, for he was not the kind of a young man one would expect to follow a Bible panorama. He would have married her then,—that was last spring,—but father would not consent to it. We knew nothing of him. He seemed to have money in abundance, and boasted of his family; but who could tell the truth of his stories? And yet he had such a way of winning your liking, that an angel in heaven

could hardly have stood out against him long, and even father got to believe in him at last, and consented to their being married after a year, if he would go away and prove himself worthy of her in that time, — for he acknowledged, quite frankly, that he had led an idle life, not altogether blameless, until he knew Christine. So, when he found father's resolution was not to be shaken, he went away. At first he wrote often, but lately she has heard nothing at all from him, and is ill, as you see, from anxiety. She fears he may be sick, but we think it much more likely that he has ceased to care for her. Some other pretty face, perhaps, has caught his fancy."

Katey was silent. She was thinking of her own experience — of Dacre. What if he should never come again? But he would, she knew. "It is very sad," she said. "Poor Christine!" And then the little old man and his tall son appeared at the parlor door. Mina rose hastily.

"Is it time to go?"

"Not yet; but Hans is in the ball-room, waiting to play, if you will come up. Ah, my dear young lady!" catching a glimpse of Katey, who had retreated behind Mina's chair, suddenly conscious of her unusual appearance.

"Is she not the prettiest Swiss maiden in the world?" cried Mina, dragging her forward, until her dark flushed cheeks and downcast eyes were revealed by the light from the hanging lamp in the hall.

"The costume is certainly very becoming," said the little old man; "and we are extremely obliged for your kindness," he added, with a droll little flourish-

ing bow. "Now we had better go up to Hans; we have no time to lose."

"But who is Hans?" asked Katey, as the two girls ascended the stairs.

"O, he is Mrs. Sheppart's eldest son," Mina replied, with affected carelessness, ill suited to the blush which rose to her face with the words.

CHAPTER XIV.

“HOW LIKE YOU THIS PLAY?”

THE great ball-room was unlighted, save by a couple of flaring candles at the upper end, where there was a raised stand for the musicians who led the dance upon festive occasions. To-night it was occupied by a slender, fair-haired young man, whose mild countenance, illuminated by the rays from the candles, displayed a variety of changes in expression as the party, led by pretty Mina, entered the room. A stout man, with a florid face and a generally inflated appearance, whom Katey recognized as the original of the King Cole in the bar-room, now stepped forward to snuff the candles with a business-like air, while the young man, descending awkwardly from his perch, where he had been tuning a violin, greeted Mina shyly, and bowed to Katey, with a sudden drawing together of his feet, and a spring-like bend of the back—a bow evidently learned for an occasion; but Katey by this time had become accustomed to being greeted as though she were an audience.

“Now, Hans,” said the stout man, briskly, when he too had spoken with Katey. The young man returned to his place, took up the violin he had laid down, and rested it upon his shoulder, caressing it with his cheek until it nestled into its place. Then bending his ear

towards it, as if to catch its faintest whisper, he raised his bow.

A knot of shadowy forms gathered in the doorway of the dusky room. The feeble rays of light touched the two girls in their quaint costume, and made a circle of brightness around the young musician. He was no longer awkward, self-conscious; the light within, which was a song as well, glorified his face for the moment, and made it beautiful, while the tones of the instrument,—so like a human voice speaking from the depths of a human soul,—at the touch of his hand, pleaded, and sobbed, and died away upon the ear at last with a sigh.

There was a bustle of voices and gathering forms about the player as he ceased.

"Yes," said Katey, when she had descended again with Mina to the little parlor, "it is wonderful! What does it mean? Why is he here?"

"He is only home for a visit," Mina replied. "He is to be first violin in one of the best orchestras in the country this winter. O, you can't think how hard he has worked for years, going on from one place to a higher all the time." Her enthusiasm was now quite unlike her indifference of half an hour before. "And he would never have been a musician at all but for us. His father hoped he would stay at home and take the house after a time; but Hans could not endure the thought of it. He told us all his desire and hope to be a musician, one time when we were here a number of years ago,—for we are old friends, you see,—and father persuaded Mr. Sheppart to let him take a few lessons; then Wulf got him a chance to play in the orchestra of the theatre that winter of which I told

you — last winter, indeed — with him; and so it has gone on, father saying a word occasionally to Mr. Sheppart, until now there is no need for any one to say a word — his violin can speak for him. But when we come here he always plays, as he has to-night, that we may see how he has improved. He never forgets to be grateful, and that is the best of it all. So many do, you know. But it is time we went to the hall; and here come father and Wulf now."

They were much finer in dress than they had been in the cars. The long boots had been discarded, and there were knots of gay ribbons at their knees. They had changed their cloth jackets, too, for others of velvet, gayly embroidered, and around their hats were tied gilt cords and tassels, like those upon Mina's and Katey's. It was a brilliant costume, but such as no Tyrolese peasant in his brightest dreams had ever imagined himself possessing.

Katey was in a flutter of nervous alarm as they crossed the "green" before the little inn, fortunately hidden, by the gathering darkness and the cloaks in which they were wrapped, from the prying eyes of the curious crowd gathered about the door of the hall where the concert was to be. It was early, and the hall nearly empty, as they saw when passing through it to the curtained corner near the stage which was to serve as a dressing-room. Here the two girls were left alone, while the little old man and his son returned to the door to look after the sale of the tickets. Katey had been quickly and easily persuaded to take her part in the entertainment; knowing that it was to consist only in walking upon the stage and standing with the others. In the excitement of dressing for the new

character, after her impulsive assent, there had been no time to dwell upon her probable sensations in finding herself before an audience; and later, Mina's story and the incident in the ball-room had engrossed her mind. Now, as she sat upon an old wooden chair in this curtained corner, waiting for the hall to fill, and Wulf and his father to return, hearing the tramp and shuffle of feet and the murmur of voices close beside her, she was overcome with terror. Her hands and feet became stiff and cold; her tongue seemed paralyzed, and she shivered involuntarily, though the place had seemed uncomfortably warm when they entered it. Mina, on the contrary, danced about, shaking out her skirts, re-tying the ribbons upon her hair, and setting her hat jauntily upon her little round head.

"I cannot do it," Katey said at last. "I can never go up there; it is useless to try;" pointing to half a dozen steps leading up on the stage, the mounting of which would seem to be no very difficult feat.

"Why, I do believe you are frightened!" exclaimed Mina, half in surprise and half in unbelief, pausing before her. She took Katey's cold hands in her warm little palms, and chafed them, talking all the time. "It will be nothing when you are once there," she said; "and you have not to sing, you know. We shall stand in a half circle, you and I between father and Wulf, and your hat will shade your face, so that no one will notice that you don't sing. There! now you are better;" and Katey did, indeed, feel herself partially reassured by the touch of the warm hands and the sound of the cheerful, encouraging voice. A corner of the curtain was raised, and the little old man and Wulf appeared.

"It is quite full — is it not?" said Mina, catching a glimpse of the hall as the curtain fell. "The accident has detained so many people!" she added.

"Yes, my dear," returned her father, in a lofty tone; "but the accident did not compel them to patronize our entertainment."

An impatient stamping of feet began to sound outside now at intervals. Katey started nervously.

"Let them call," said the little old man, with a placid smile. "Nothing is valued, my dear young lady, which may be had for the asking. Delay stimulates curiosity and interest; only, however, to a certain point. A cultivated ear alone can determine when that point is reached," he added, philosophically, bending his head upon one side to listen, as again the thunder of heavy feet echoed through the room. "There is danger of waiting a moment too long, until curiosity has become irritated into angry impatience. I have known a whole evening to be spoiled by it, the audience refusing to recover its good humor."

Again the building seemed to shake to its foundations, and above the deafening noise sounded a shrill whistle.

"There is not a moment to lose now," said the little old man; "I would not risk another round; that whistle struck the key-note;" and he mounted the steps hastily.

"If you are frightened, you can go off at any time," whispered Mina, giving Katey's hand a reassuring squeeze as she passed before her. But Katey thought that to go off would be much more dreadful, even, than to remain, when once upon the stage.

In the confusion of applause which greeted their

appearance, it was not difficult to cross the platform, and take one of the four chairs set out primly in a row.

"Move your chair back, as I do," whispered Mina; and Katey found herself somewhat screened by this arrangement. She remembered also Mina's advice to glance once all over and about the room.

"You will never know, until you try it, how that one glance will reassure you," she had said. And she did even this, beginning with the farther end of the hall, where was only a confusion of heads moving apparently upon pivots, and set in rows. To her delight, they did not seem to represent individuals at all. Her courage rose, and when at last she had reached a cross-eyed woman down in front, who was staring fixedly at no one of them in particular, her fears had vanished. She began even to be amused by her odd position, and to wish, when they stood up for the first song, — in which she could take no part, — that some chance would place Delphine and Jack before her, or that Josie Durant's high-bred face might start out from among the strange countenances at which she dared not look now, lest she should betray her silence. How aghast with surprise and horror would they be could they see her at this moment!

Of one custom Mina had forgotten to inform her. It was the habit of the family, at a certain point in the entertainment, to descend from the platform, and walk slowly down and back through the audience, by which means a most natural curiosity was gratified. Mina explained this now, in a hurried whisper, when the first part of the concert was over, and the little old man, having made known aloud their intention, proceeded to leave the stage, followed by the others

—Katey with downcast eyes, and crimson, tingling cheeks. She would have refused had she dared, or had there been a moment to explain. For might not some one recognize her, after all? Might not some of her fellow-passengers upon the train remember her face? For the first time it flashed upon her mind that this innocent, good-natured part she had undertaken so thoughtlessly might be misinterpreted. She was following Mina, hearing Wulf's step behind her, conscious of the absurdity of her position, painfully conscious of the forms on either side leaning out from their places, rising from their seats, and yet silent and respectful, when they reached the end of the hall. Katey, with her eyes upon the floor, had followed the twinkle of the little heels before her. Now, suddenly they disappeared. It was nothing. Mina had only hastened her steps; but Katey, looking up in that moment of confusion and terror, met broad and full the searching, astonished gaze of a pair of deep-set, gray eyes, belonging to a square figure, leaning carelessly against the wall, and holding a soft slouched hat in his hand. Good Heavens! Where had he come from, and why was he here? It was the gentleman who had watched her at Mrs. Durant's the night before. It was the man who had recognized Dacre upon the street. The glance of amused curiosity which he had bestowed upon the others changed to the blankest amazement at sight of her, settling at last into a cold, hard stare, in which she read only suspicion and condemnation. She paused involuntarily. Already she was some distance behind the others. Wulf, seeing only this, and fearing that she was overcome by timidity, took her by the arm, and hastened her on.

How the remainder of the evening was passed she hardly knew. She followed mechanically the movements of the others, but never once again raising her eyes to the audience, from whom she turned away at last with a sense of relief beyond the power of words to express. She was ashamed to care so little for the gratitude which her new friends poured out in their simplicity and delight over the success of her part in the entertainment. She thought only of getting away without again encountering the cold stare of those sharp, gray eyes.

The audience dispersed at last, and they left the hall through the crowd which still lingered about the door, eager for any crumbs which their curiosity might pick up. Hidden behind Wulf, and clinging to Mina, not daring to look up, she hastened out and across the green. O the blessedness of the shelter, when the door of the ugly little inn had closed behind them !

CHAPTER XV.

A NEW LIFE.

KATEY awoke late the next morning. She was tired, and almost ill, after the excitement of the previous day. The first train for La Fayette had already gone, which she hardly regretted, since it gave her time to rest and partially recover herself. It was afternoon before she bade adieu to her new friends, and started again upon her journey. King Cole volunteered to see her safely aboard the train, but this was an honor which the little old man felt should fall only upon himself, and which he bore by no means with meekness, making Katey painfully conspicuous at the station, by his fussy efforts to insure her comfort. "Good by, my dear young lady, good by," he said at last, still lingering, though the train was beginning to move. "Remember that you have always sincere and obliged friends in the Hauser family;" with which little speech, not unlike the conclusion of a letter, he folded himself up quickly, and hastened away.

It was night when she reached her destination. But while she is standing upon the platform of the station, not at all sure that some one in the crowd under the blinking lamps may not have come to meet her, let us say a word of the town in which she has found herself.

La Fayette is one of the few cities in the United States which have truly the appearance of long inhabitation; with narrow streets, dull brick houses, and a church visited by strangers, since it is one of the oldest in the country, as those undoubted historians, the stones in the churchyard, testify.

It is situated in one of the Middle States, close upon the Southern, at the junction of two streams of revolutionary fame; and, with its winding, narrow streets, its dingy old houses, its Saturday market held by old women in flapping caps upon the curbstones, is not unlike a continental city in appearance.

Lying near the southern boundary of the state, its interests are so closely connected with that section of the Union, that, although professedly neutral in the feeling which ran so high even before the war, its sympathies really and fiercely followed its interests. There is nothing so bitter in its hatred, so strong in its partisanship, as "neutrality." Even at this time — a year, more or less, before the hot, angry words led to blows — an avowed northern man was rare here; an avowed northern sentiment rarer still.

The school in which Katey had sought a position was an institution founded and partly supported by a religious sect. It was not, however, termed an academy, but a college; and had received a charter from the state legislature. The only visible effect of this was, that the principal was mentioned in the catalogue, and always addressed as president, while the male teachers bore the high-sounding title of professor.

President Humphrey was a northern man, a clergyman, who had been for years a missionary in India —

a mountain of a man physically, about whose summit, where the snow was beginning to fall softly, the sun nevertheless always shone. Keen, watchful, sarcastic at times, he yet bore an air of genial ease approaching indolence — to one who could forget his peculiar, restless, dark eyes. He held the school in his great hand, and moulded it to his will, not by the display of authority, not by the pressure of a finger even, but through the belief, unconsciously working in the minds of his subjects, that within him was a power, never exercised, because the present occasion was always too insignificant, but none the less mighty and irresistible. A northern man, he held his place as long as it served his purpose to do so, by holding his tongue. Before that would have become impossible, he had accepted a position elsewhere.

The senior among the professors, by reason of years, long residence, and his position as instructor in the dead languages, was Professor Paine. He, too, was a retired clergyman, but of another mould and stamp. He was timid and precise in manner, thin and brown of appearance, dressed invariably with scrupulous neatness in ministerial black, and was remarkable, mentally, for his clear convictions of duty, and his knowledge of Latin and Greek, as well as for his quiet persistency in maintaining his position in regard to either. An unwavering Arminian, he would not have hesitated to dispute with Calvin himself, had the opportunity been offered; a strong believer in states' rights, only a hundred miles of territory saved him from persecution, and prevented his becoming a martyr to his political faith a little later. And yet he was a coward. He lived in mortal terror of — the school-girls!

Girl-nature was to him a language, the alphabet of which he had not been able to master. Upon the rare occasions when it became necessary for him, in the absence of the other teachers, to preside in the study-hall, he entered the room with a deprecatory air, at which the young Amazons smiled cruelly and visibly. He mounted to the high desk with a stumbling step, seated himself with a care which implied a doubt as to final results, and surveyed the room with an attempted expression of ease, which perished in the bud, his countenance saying in every line, "Now, young ladies, now — now — really! O, you dreadful creatures, what are you going to do?"

Then, first one desk-lid would fall with a sound like an explosion; another, at the farther end of the room, would respond; a third would take it up, until every desk in the hall seemed in motion; while the poor professor, turning his head spasmodically from side to side, his bewildered face a deep mahogany hue, tried in vain to fix upon the offenders. He was known to have even fled from the room. But did the president appear in the doorway, every sound ceased, every eye was fixed upon the page before it. These occurrences, however, were rare; perhaps because the occasions were rare, indeed, upon which he was called to preside.

The first among the professors, in point of fact, was Professor Dyce — he who strove to inculcate the natural sciences and higher mathematics upon the unwilling minds of the girls, and to whom all authority was intrusted in the absence of the president. Like him, he was born and had been reared in the north, but had spent some years of his life abroad,

in the comfortable belief that he was to fall heir to a wealth which made any exertion for his own support unnecessary. Circumstances, however, — including a lawsuit, — rendering this belief problematical, and, at the same time, calling him to La Fayette, instead of indulging vain hopes or useless fears, he sought and obtained a position in this school while awaiting the result, and, to prepare himself for a possible future, was pursuing medical studies in his moments of leisure.

Besides these two, there were connected with the institution Mr. Milde, the teacher of drawing and painting ; Professor Grôte, the music-master , and still another, of unnecessary and unpronounceable name, who came upon certain days to instruct the young ladies in the modern languages. Mr. Milde was a bashful young man, with large brown eyes, and a smooth, boyish face, chiefly remarkable for the adamantine nature of his heart, since no amount of strength brought to bear upon his sensibilities — in the shape of coquettish airs and manners, or even sighs and half-concealed tears — was able to swerve him from the rigid performance of his duty, which was, as has been said, to teach the young ladies of the La Fayette Female College the principles of drawing and painting.

With Professor Grôte, high-shouldered, square of face, auburn-haired, and with twinkling blue eyes behind his gold-rimmed spectacles, the young coquettes were more successful. At least, numerous stories of pretty compliments, paid in the professor's oddly-accented English, floated about the school ; not well-authenticated stories, by any means, but suf-

ficiently plausible to give a romantic interest to the great, bare music-room, and dull little practising-closets, and to flavor somewhat the rather tasteless school-life. As to the female teachers, they shall be enumerated later,—when Katey has found a more comfortable resting-place, even for a summer night, than the crowded platform of a railway station.

Evidently no one had come to meet her. The carriages, drawn up in a dusky line, were beginning to drive rapidly away. She descended the steps, and entered the last and only remaining one, which had been disdained, perhaps, on account of its shabby appearance. In a moment it was climbing the narrow, steep street, rattling over the round paving-stones of the town, turning corners, and making abortive dives at houses dimly shadowed forth in the flickering gas-light, with a kind of jerk and shamble of motion which brought her at last to her destination—a brick house, tall and gloomy of appearance in the dim light, detached from the others upon the street, and with a double flight of high stone steps leading to two doors placed side by side.

“Pull either bell,” the cabman called, as she hesitated between the two; “it’s all the same.”

A servant opened the door. She stepped into a narrow hall, full of the sound of voices suddenly hushed, proceeding from an open doorway on the right, which was immediately filled by a giant form, while President Humphrey’s dark face shone down upon her full of kindly welcome, when she had introduced herself. He was followed by his wife, a little woman of delicate appearance, who greeted Katey languidly, and drew her into the room from which the voices

had come — a pretty apartment, with its bamboo furniture and quaint foreign ornaments. It was brilliantly lighted now, and to Katey, dazzled after the dull glimmer of the street lamps, seemed to be filled with people. A little round man upon the sofa, whose cravat appeared to have inadvertently started his eyes from his head, rose, at her entrance, with a kind of bounce. This was one of the parents, whom term-time had brought to Mrs. Humphrey's drawing-room — Mr. Solomon Luckiwinner, the owner of many shares in more than one Pennsylvania coal mine, and the possessor, also, of a daughter, which accounted for his presence here. She was an exceedingly diminutive, prim young lady, of insignificant countenance, overloaded in dress and weighed down with jewelry, which seemed so out of place upon her as to give one the impression that she was only holding it a few moments for the accommodation of some one else. Just now her small features were swollen and disfigured by crying. The pangs of homesickness had seized upon her already. Katey, conscious of an unaccountable sinking of her own heart, felt an irresistible drawing towards the forlorn girl, who gave her a prim, dutiful little bow, and then subsided, with a suppressed sob, into her corner again, as one or two of the lady teachers rose hastily and came forward to greet her: Miss Severance — tall, fair, brown-eyed, and sweet to look at, dressed in deepest black; Miss Wormley — of whom Katey marked only, at the moment, the blink of watery, red-rimmed eyes; and "Our preceptress, Miss Hersey," — a plump, high-shouldered, fair-haired woman, of anxious countenance and timid, hesitating manner, whom nature had in-

tended for a happier sphere, but fate and circumstances had made preceptress of the La Fayette Female College. These all resided in the two houses which made up the school buildings; for, in addition to the one containing Mrs. Humphrey's drawing-room, there was another at a short distance around the corner of the street, the two being connected in the rear by a wide veranda, at the point where their angles met. In the corner itself was a smaller house, which Professor Paine occupied with his family. The other gentlemen connected with the institution, with the exception of Professor Dyce, came in at stated hours to their classes.

"You would be glad to go to your room, I am sure," said Miss Hersey, upon whom devolved the duty of entertaining these school guests; "but, as it is in the other house, perhaps you had better take your tea first. We did not know when to expect you, after the accident yesterday. Professor Dyce and our new housekeeper were delayed by it; but they came on this morning. We thought, from your letter, that you would come by that train; but Professor Dyce could not recall any one whom he judged to be you."

Katey ran over in her mind the few faces among the passengers which she could remember. "I was upon the train, but I think I did not see him," she said.

"Very likely; you were not in the same car, I presume."

"How did you pass the night? Of course you were obliged to remain at the junction."

It was Mrs. Humphrey who roused herself to speak from the arm-chair in which she was hidden. How

timid and easily confused this rather stately young lady was, after all, she thought, as Katey replied, with evident embarrassment, that she had found a very comfortable inn close by the station.

"Still, it must have been very awkward to go to an inn alone," suggested Miss Wormley, craning her long neck, and patting her faded, sandy hair.

"But I was not alone," Katey replied, quickly. Then she checked herself.

"O, you were with friends?" Miss Wormley saw no reason why this girl should not relate the circumstances exactly as they occurred.

Fortunately, at this moment, Miss Hersey, after a little flurried start and glance round the room, proposed that Katey should go down to tea, and rose to lead the way. It was long after the usual tea hour, and she was served alone. When they returned, the president and Miss Severance had left the room. Mrs. Humphrey was dozing in her chair, while Miss Wormley had drawn near Mr. Luckiwinner, to whose remarks she was listening with a simper of pleased attention upon her countenance.

"I ain't much of a scholar myself," he was saying, "but I reckon Clary, here, shall larn about all there is;" and he described a half-circle with his right hand, upon which shone an enormous diamond ring, as though gathering within its limits all the wisdom of the earth, which was to find a place in poor little Miss Luckiwinner's head. "There's money enough." He winked, and chuckled, and gurgled, in an alarming way. "Don't leave nothing out. We'll have all them high-sounding things. The Lord knows the name of 'em, I don't. Won't we, Clary?" appealing to the corner. But the only reply was a burst of sobs.

"There, there, don'tee now," he said, soothingly, drawing the girl forward, and seating her upon his knee. "You won't mind us, ma'am?" to Mrs. Humphrey, as the girl buried her face upon her father's shoulder. "You see, she ain't had no mother these good many years." Perhaps it was the tight neck-handkerchief which squeezed the tears at this moment into his own eyes. He brushed them away with the coarse hand upon which gleamed the showy ring. "I've had to be dad and marm, too. Ain't I, Clary? There, there, it won't be no time at all before you'll be comin' home on your vacation, with so much larnin' in your head, that you can't talk to your poor dad." This he said with a comprehensive wink around the room; but the only reply was a tighter clasp of the arms about his neck, and a new burst of sobs into his bosom. "And then there's Rol coming to see you next week. That's her brother," he explained; "and may be I shall look in on you by the week after. Perhaps I'll come to school myself!" he added, as a triumph of wit. "You don't think your dad's too old to larn them high-soundin' things—do ye, little gal?"

There was a burst of laughter from the hidden head at this, and Mr. Luckiwinner choked, and gurgled, and reddened, and gasped, as though he were in danger of going out like a sputtering candle. When he had so far recovered himself as to be able to blow his nose upon a handkerchief with a flaming border, he addressed himself to Katey.

"They tell me you're agoin' to be a teacher here; well, if you'd have an eye on my little gal—bein' young yourself," he went on, without noticing the

change in Miss Wormley's countenance — from the most tender pity and sympathy to astonishment and gathering indignation. "If you'd let her room with you, say, I'd fit up that room without sparin' no expense; velvet carpet, three-story black walnut bedstead, with filigree work over the top, carved side-board to put your clothes in, and all them little silver gimcracks that women like to have round on the bureau, handsomer'n any communion service you ever see."

Ho spoke eagerly and hurriedly; but Miss Hersey ventured to interfere, and explain that it was against the rules of the school for the teachers to share their rooms with the pupils. But, as each one had charge of a dormitory hall, the young lady could room upon Miss Earle's hall if she chose; and so the matter was arranged.

Suddenly, Mrs. Humphrey, who had been fast asleep, wrapped in a soft white shawl, summer night though it was, roused herself with a little yawn, to ask, "Where is Professor Dyce? Has any one seen him since tea?" The question was answered unexpectedly. A quick, firm step sounded in the hall, followed by a deep voice in momentary colloquy with some one there, and the professor himself entered the room.

"Here he is now," said Miss Hersey, before he appeared, hearing his step, which could never be mistaken for the president's heavy roll, or Professor Paine's timid creep. Katey turned with listless curiosity. She had half risen to ask to be shown to her room. She dropped upon her seat again, her heart for the moment ceasing to beat. It was the gentle-

man who had recognized Dacre Home upon the street, and who had confronted her so unexpectedly the night before. Why had she never imagined the possibility of this?

"Ah," said Mrs. Humphrey, "we were just speaking of you; Miss Hersey, will you—" She sank back into her chair with a little wave of her hand towards Miss Earle, whom Miss Hersey hastened to present.

The professor had marked the shrinking figure as he entered,—some frightened school-girl, he had said to himself; but at the sound of her name, he came forward with outstretched hand, and a pleasant, reassuring word upon his lips, remembering the timid start of the slight figure whose face he was curious to see.

He recalled the image of an odd little girl, bearing this same name, whom he had befriended years before, at a children's party in Boston. She had forgotten the occasion and time, of course, and he had no thought of making himself known to her; but the recollection quickened his curiosity, and warmed his usual cool, grave manner into unwonted cordiality.

Katey rose, but she did not lift her eyes. Had she not felt before the sudden, freezing stare, which she had not the courage to meet again? As for the professor, his hand fell to his side, the half-uttered words of welcome came to an untimely end, he bowed low, and, turning away abruptly, seated himself by Mrs. Humphrey's chair.

Poor Katey, left standing in the middle of the floor, her bonnet pushed back from her burning face, her slender fingers tightly clasping each other as she

tried to repress the tears which sprang to her eyes, remembered Jack — remembered Delphine's pleasant home with a longing like a pain. Why had she come here? Did not Jack say that she would do something absurd and unheard of? And so she had already. She stooped and picked up her shawl, which had fallen to the floor, as the buzz of conversation sounded again in her ears. Would he tell, here and now, where he had last seen her? The part she had played so thoughtlessly, and, as it seemed to her at the time, so innocently, appeared now almost like a crime. Could she confess it if called upon? For a moment she almost thought she might. Then she remembered the skirts, of modest length, to be sure, but much shorter than fashion or custom dictated. Strange that a few inches should condemn her; and yet she knew they would. She might tell the story, but she could never own to the little red petticoat!

"Have you come far to-day?" There was a sudden silence, as Professor Dyce's voice, with its slightly sarcastic tone, crossed the room. The question was for her, then,—when he knew. Did he think to expose and confound her before them all? Pride, and something almost like anger, came to her rescue.

"I have come from the junction," she answered, with that forced, outward composure which answers so often and well for inward quiet. She did not shrink from meeting his eyes now. She had been foolish, perhaps, but she had done no wrong.

"The accident detained you there, I presume; you must have found the time of waiting rather dull."

She thought of the little company of which she had made one, and which he had seen trooping down through the hall in their fantastic garb. Dull! It was dreadful to remember; but it certainly was not dull. The flame in her face rose to her hair.

"Yes," ventured Miss Wormley, who had watched Miss Earle from the moment of the professor's entrance, and was confident not only that they had met before, but that there was some secret cause of embarrassment on Katey's side, "it must have been very tiresome; but she was with friends, I believe. Did you not say that you met friends upon the train?"

Katey had risen from her seat and crossed the room, trailing the little bright shawl after her. She did not appear to have heard the question. "I am very tired," she said, addressing Miss Hersey; "could I be shown to my room?"

"O, certainly," Miss Hersey responded quickly, rising and leading the way, when Katey had made a dignified adieu, which included the whole room. "I beg your pardon; I forgot that you were still in your bonnet."

They crossed the great music-room, and descended a few steps to the wide veranda, enclosed on three sides by the buildings, and open to the garden upon the fourth, at the further end of which was a door, which Miss Hersey unlocked; here they found themselves in a narrow hall, with the school-room upon the right, shrouded in darkness now, and a flight of stairs just before them.

"We might have come through the school-room," said Miss Hersey; "but it is so much more direct

that we usually cross the veranda, as you will find. This is my hall," she added, as they reached the top of the first flight of stairs. "Yours is above it; I will show you;" and she led the way. A long, wide passage extended the length of the building; upon either side were ranged doors, in a long line, broken upon one side by a descending stairway, which turned and was lost to sight in the darkness.

The last of this line of doors proved to give entrance to Katey's apartment—a cosy little corner room, lighted by windows upon either side, and neatly furnished. She had no regrets for the pretty, luxurious chamber which had been her own in Delphine's home. If her mind had been at ease, she would have been quite content with her surroundings.

"There are no girls yet upon this hall, I think; but they will come to-morrow. My room, however, it directly under yours, and if you are timid—"

"O, I am not at all afraid," Katey said, quickly, longing to be alone. "But Miss Luckiwinner?" she asked, suddenly.

"Yes; I had forgotten. I will see that she has the next room; it is not engaged, and she will probably prefer to occupy it to-night, rather than stay in the other house. I will attend to it." Then, with a pleasant good night, Miss Hersey left her.

She had lighted the gas and closed the shutters. Katey's trunk had been brought up and placed behind the door. She sat down beside it. It was familiar to her eyes, like the face of a friend, and she had not realized, until this moment, how heavy-hearted she was. Could Professor Dyce send her away in disgrace? No; he would hardly do that without giving her an

opportunity to explain. But did she wish to explain? She was not at all sure that she did. Even now she resented the tone in which he had addressed her. She felt that he had mocked her. If he demanded an explanation she would give it to him; she could not do less; otherwise she would say nothing at all. He had looked at her with surprise and suspicion the first time they met; but he had no right to judge her. And that brought her mind again to Dacre — poor Dacre, of whom every one — unless it were Delphine — disapproved. The air of the room was close and stifling; she turned down the gas and threw open the shutters. There was something in the stillness of the hot, starless night, which brought back almost painfully the last time she had seen him, when her cry had called him back to her. But for that, she knew, he would have gone away forever. Was it regret that weighed her spirit down with the thought? Poor Dacre! his handsome, dissatisfied face rose before her, as though she had evoked it from the shadows. He loved her. He would come to her. But when, and where? Everything in the future was dark and uncertain at this moment, as she closed the shutters and turned away from the window.

She was falling into a troubled sleep, when there came a feeble rap upon the door. "It is I," said a timid voice. "It is Miss Luckiwinner. O, please open the door." Katey unlocked it quickly, to be met by little Miss Luckiwinner's tear-stained face and slender, white-robed figure. "Do let me come in," she said. "I can't sleep, I am so frightened to be alone."

"Stay with me, then," said Katey, stricken with compunction at having quite forgotten her.

So the trembling little figure crept into Katey's bed, where she soon forgot her fears, as did Katey her anxieties, in the blessed sleep of youth, which, for the time, at least, wipes out all cares.

CHAPTER XVI.

"AND ONE WAS WATER, AND ONE STAR WAS FIRE."

THE girls had returned from the long vacation; the classes were re-formed, and went on as usual, and Katey had fallen naturally into the place assigned her. Whatever fears she had been conscious of at first, in regard to being allowed to remain, were allayed, if they had not entirely vanished. The kindly relations established between the other teachers and herself convinced her that Professor Dyce had not imparted his prejudices to them. With him she still felt that she was under the strictest surveillance. Often the door of her class-room opened noiselessly in the midst of a recitation, and he stood beside her, cold, calm, and critical, yet saying nothing, and departing as he came. At his first visit, she was startled and discomposed. The book in her hand fell to the floor; he restored it gravely. She offered a chair; he refused it politely, but coldly. The younger girls tittered.

"Attend to the lesson," Miss Earle said, calmly, though her face blazed; and the recitation went on. From that day his visits were apparently unnoticed. Katey offered him no more civilities, except sometimes a dignified bow if he chanced to enter in her face.

Often, when a group of girls gathered around her upon the wide veranda, — the favorite lounging-place

after school hours in these pleasant September days, so like a bit of forgotten summer, — the professor's form would appear in their midst. Then, if she were the speaker at the moment, the words died upon Katey's lips. Sometimes in the evening, when she had taken her work for an hour down into the study hall, where the other teachers were gathered and Professor Dyce sat enthroned, looking up from her needle she would find the sharp gray eyes fixed upon her with a puzzled, strange expression, which sent the stitches all awry. His class-room adjoined her own. She had caught a glimpse of its arrangement more than once through the half-open door. He had fitted it for a study as well as class-room, with a comfort, and even luxury, which made the others seem bare by comparison. The teachers were accustomed to seek him here, to offer complaints, or ask advice or assistance. Katey met them often as she came from or went to her classes. Indeed, hardly a day passed in which Miss Wormley's teetering step and high-pitched voice were not heard outside the door. She alone had never entered his room. She had no complaints to make, no aid to ask; her duties were simple and plain.

She had drawn Clary Luckiwinner away from the other girls one afternoon. Clary was a dull scholar at best, but in French verbs she was well nigh hopeless. Katey, seeing her pore over them day after day, endeavored to drill her out of school hours, by a method of her own. It was half an hour before tea, and the long file of girls detailed for afternoon exercise had just returned. They filled the veranda, they chattered in the study-hall and upon the stairs, they had even invaded her own room upon some flimsy pretext.

"I know of but one quiet place," Katey said. "Come, Clary."

She would not seek her class-room. Its neighborhood to the professor's sanctum made her avoid it at all times when it was possible to do so. But under the music-room was a great, dimly-lighted hall, where no one could disturb them for a time. It was a kind of lumber-room, with boxes ranged against the walls. One of these, tall and narrow, held a skeleton, with which the older girls delighted to frighten the more timid, by touching the spring attached to its jaws, and causing it suddenly to gnash its hideous teeth. Opposite this was a door barred by a stationary table hanging flat against the posts ordinarily, but raised on Friday afternoons, when the clothes were given out from the store-room here connected with the laundry in the rear. This was the province of Mrs. Jones—the jimmer-jawed woman who had come from New Hampshire unattended. At other times the hall was only used as a passage between the new building—as the one containing the school-room was called—and the dining-room, and mostly in the extremely cold or stormy weather, when it would be uncomfortable to cross the sheltered veranda. It was here that Katey led Clary to remain until the horrible gong, always beaten in this place, should announce tea, and drive them away. Curled upon one of the great boxes, her back resting fearlessly against the high, red case containing the skeleton, Katey opened the grammar. "Now, Clary, which is it? The third? Or shall we look over the exercise first?" The two heads were very close together as they turned the leaves to find the place, when suddenly, without voice or warning,

a well-kept but by no means small hand reached over and between them, and the book disappeared. Clary uttered a sharp little scream. Even Katey caught her breath. Had the skeleton become reanimated? Certainly no skeleton ever displayed such muscular fingers as those which had closed over the book in her lap. She remembered now that this hall was the direct passage from the class-rooms to the library, to the president's office, and, indeed, the whole of the story above, as well as to the dining-room upon this floor; and with the indignation in her face there was blended no surprise to see Professor Dyce standing before her, coolly turning the leaves of the French Grammar, as she descended from her undignified position, and walked away without a word, leaving Clary to remain or follow, as she chose. Clary, whose intuitions were not especially keen, chose to stay. She was not at all afraid of Professor Dyce, who, although reserved in his intercourse with the girls, was yet too thoroughly just in his dealings to fail to win their respect, and a kind word or two bestowed upon Clary in the days of her desolation had made her his faithful servant. She began now with an elaborate explanation of the circumstances which had brought them here, ending with a eulogy upon Katey's patient endeavors in her behalf. "It makes no difference how tired she is; she hears me say them every day," she added, in conclusion.

"But Miss Earle does not have the French classes."

"O, no; Miss Wormley has us beginners. But it is very kind in Miss Earle," Clary ventured. It had dawned upon her at last that there was something like disapproval in the professor's manner.

"Yes," he said, thoughtfully, giving her the book, and passing on.

Katey's steps were quickened when once out of the professor's sight. Passing the school-room, she saw that it was empty now. Her eyes were full of angry tears, and there was a choking sob in her throat. The awful shriek and wail of the gong sounded in her ears. She could not go on to her room, meeting half the school upon the way. She turned in here, and passed down the length of the room to one of the desks in the last row. The shutters were closed to keep out the dust whirling through the narrow streets in the September wind; the light was dim here; no one would notice her. She was shaded, too, by the heavy, winding stairway behind her, beginning in a broad step or two, then branching off on either side, and leading to the dormitory halls above. No one would descend here; these stairs were never used except upon grand occasions. The last shriek of the gong—like a voice from Pandemonium—had died away. She would not heed the summons; Clary alone would miss her—Clary, who followed her like a spaniel, and with whom she could not be trusted, it seemed; and for the moment the anger that rose within her dried away her tears.

The place was very still. The bustle and din of the town were shut out from her retreat. The very quiet soothed and calmed her after a while. She crossed her arms upon the desk, and laid her head upon them. A gentle drowsiness stole over her—the rest which comes after a sharp pain. She was roused by a step upon the veranda—a quick, resounding step belonging to no one of the girls. It would

pass on. But to her terror it drew nearer and nearer. She would not raise her head. The shadows would hide her. It came down the aisle, it paused beside her. She lay quite still, but stifled by the frightened beating of her heart. It was Professor Dyce, she knew. One moment, then he moved softly away as though he thought she slept.

She raised her head when the door had closed after him. There was a rustle of garments behind, and yet above her. She turned quickly. Did she dream it? Or had she seen at that moment Miss Wormley's blinking eyes peering down from the winding stairs behind her?

There was the rush of slippered feet upon the veranda, the sound of sharp, shrill voices, the door was flung open, tea was over, and the girls streamed by and in at the farther end of the room.

Some one approached with anxious haste, bearing a little tray carefully. It was Clary Luckiwinner, her face aglow. "I have brought you some tea and toast; and I begged Mrs. Jones to give me a bit of marmalade;" and she set her tray down upon the desk.

"But I have a headache. I did not care for anything. How did you know I was here?" Katey said, quickly.

"O, Professor Dyce told me that you were asleep in the school-room. And he said perhaps Mrs. Jones would let me carry some tea to you. It is quite like a picnic — isn't it?" Clary went on, spreading a fresh napkin over the desk.

So she was indebted to Professor Dyce? He had repented, then, of his rudeness. Perhaps he had come to tell her so. She was still sore and hurt, and by no



IT CAME DOWN THE AISLE, IT PAUSED BESIDE HER. Page 184.

means inclined to forgive him ; but she was faint also, and feverish with thirst ; so she drank the tea thankfully, and ate the thin slices of toast which Clary's delighted hands spread for her.

She would not stay in her own room that evening, as she was at first inclined to do. She was too proud to hide, as though she were sorry or ashamed. And yet she shrank from meeting the professor again. She waited until past the hour of assembling in the study-hall, and then stole down the stairs, and slipped into a seat near the door. It was Friday evening. There were no lessons for the next day to be learned. The girls had gathered in knots, sewing in hand, waiting for some one of the teachers to read aloud, as was the custom. Miss Hersey, turning her perplexed, annoyed face towards the clock continually, rose at last with some hesitation ; but at that moment the door opened, and Professor Dyce walked into the room, and ascended to the desk. The half-suppressed voices ceased as he searched among the books before him. There was a perceptible frown upon the broad forehead. Some one ventured an irrelevant question. He answered sharply. The girls stared, and whispered to each other. He found the book he sought, raised his head, and glanced over the group of teachers by the door. His face cleared somewhat at sight of Katey's gray-clad figure seated composedly with the others, her head bent over her work. He turned the pages, found the place, and began to read.

"Notwithstanding the general rules established for the conviction and punishment of the Christians, the fate of those sectaries, in an extensive and arbitrary government, must still, in a great measure, have de-

pended on their own behavior, the circumstances of the times, and the temper of their supreme as well as subordinate rulers."

The girls yawned, and exchanged communications furtively. Katey's fingers went on mechanically with her work. Her thoughts wandered miles away in an idle reverie. All at once they were interrupted. The voice of the reader ceased. Recalled unexpectedly to the present time and place, she raised her eyes involuntarily. The professor had asked some question in regard to what he had read, which was met by the blankest silence. He turned from his inattentive hearers, and misinterpreting the startled expression upon Katey's countenance, his face resumed its usual tranquillity. "You may reply, please."

The work fell from her hands. She stammered and blushed, feeling every eye upon her. "I beg your pardon; I — I was not listening," she was obliged to say.

The book closed with a snap. "There will be no more reading to-night;" and the professor descended from his desk, and quitted the room.

The assembly broke up in confusion, but not before Katey had caught Miss Wormley's whispered exclamation, "Stupid!"

Yes, it was thoroughly stupid. How could she have done so? She was humbled and penitent.

"Don't mind it at all," said gentle Miss Severance in her ear, as they were leaving the room. "It would have been the same with any of us; we were not paying the least attention."

"It was so unlike Professor Dyce," added Miss Hersey. "I never knew him to read Roman History before on Friday evening."

Saturday morning was a time of unrestrained liberty to the girls. They came and went as they chose, making purchases, or paying visits, if they were so fortunate as to have friends in the town. Katey, bound by no restrictions upon other days, was glad to stay within doors to enjoy the unusual quiet of the deserted school-room and empty halls. She had finished a letter to Delphine, and was on her way now to leave it upon the desk in the school-room, from which the letters were gathered at certain hours. Some one ran against her at the foot of the stairs. It was little Maria Chillson, one of the youngest girls in the school, all in a flutter of haste and flying ribbons. "O, Miss Earle, I was coming to your room. I have got something for you." She pulled and tugged at her pocket, bringing out neither cake nor candy, — with which that receptacle was usually filled, — but a note.

From whom could it be? There was no postmark or stamp upon it, and the handwriting was strange to her. She turned it over and over; there was no mistake. "Miss Katherine Earle," the superscription read.

"Where did you get this?"

"A gentleman gave it to me on the street. He went away to write it, and came back again. And he asked me ever so many questions, too, — if you had to sit in the school-room evenings, and all that," the child added, carelessly. It was nothing to her. She was impatient to be gone again. The precious moments were slipping away.

Katey sat down upon the stairs, seized with a sudden trembling. It had come at last, then. He had

not forgotten her. She had not trusted him in vain. And he was so near! She rose up hurriedly, and was hastening up the stairs, holding the precious letter tight in her hand, when she remembered the child. "Maria!" she called. The blue ribbons were half way across the veranda. They came back drooping, and slowly. She took the child in her arms. "I want to tell you something," she said. "You must never do this again. You must never listen to any stranger upon the street. Will you remember?"

"Yes, ma'am;" but the child made an impatient movement to free herself from Katey's arm.

"And now you had better come with me."

"But I want to go out again. I—"

"You are too young to go out alone. It must not happen again. Never mind,"—as the heavy little countenance fell into a still more forlorn expression of disappointment,— "I will go with you some afternoon next week; and now you may come and sit with me, if you choose, until the others return;" and she bore her off.

The note fairly burned in her pocket; but she would not open it before the child. She taxed herself to amuse her little prisoner, so that she should not feel her bonds; and the child passed a happy hour, until the gong sounded for dinner, calling them both below. It seemed as though the dinner hour would never pass. It was, indeed, the most unrestrained and social meal of the week; where the girls brought to eager telling their exploits and adventures of the morning, and at which more than half of them appeared in their hats and shawls—as they came in from the street.

Dinner over at last, she was waylaid as she passed Miss Hersey's hall, and led away to her room for a long consultation about various school matters, which seemed to Katey strangely trivial and unimportant,—longing, as she did, to be set free. Even when she had gained her own room, Clary followed close in her footsteps to ask her advice upon her toilet for the evening. It was to be one of the reception nights, which occurred three or four times in a term, when the friends of the teachers and pupils were invited to pass the evening at the school. There would be music and restrained conversation, with some simple refreshments served in the music-room. Clary, upon these rather mild occasions, decked herself out like a Chinese idol. “And what will you wear?” she asked. “Please, something light and thin; and braid your hair like a crown.” Katey threw open the shutters to let the faint breeze steal in. A flood of torrid sunlight came with it. How long the summer was a dying! “I don't know; it doesn't matter,” she answered. There was a breathlessness in her voice which had nothing to do with her words. She stood in the open window in the blazing sunlight, and gazed far up the dusty street. Somewhere in the dull old town Dacre was at this moment. O, so near!

One after another the girls in the hall stole in. A rap at the door, a faint excuse until the place was full. She might run away and leave them in possession; but where should she go? The halls, the stairs, the school-room, each held its knots of chattering girls. The skeleton-room was not to be thought of again, and she would not venture upon her class-room, lest in the narrow passage she should encounter Professor Dyce.

Not until the summons came to tea was the room cleared ; and then she followed the others. She lingered to fasten the door behind her, and so stepped out into the hall alone. As she passed little Maria Chillson's door, she saw that three figures stood just inside. They were Miss Wormley, Maria, and a dull-faced girl, who would have passed through the school unnoticed, but that she was a niece of the President of the United States, and subject to fits. Either of these circumstances would have made her remarkable. The conjunction rendered her famous.

"I don't know," Maria was saying, impatiently ; "only he gave me the note, and —"

They all turned at Katey's step. Maria flushed crimson, and hung down her head. Miss Wormley came forward with unnecessary haste. "I have had a note from Maria's mother ; I took it up to read to her," she said. Katey turned her dark eyes full upon her. It was not the truth, she knew. It was of Dacre's note to her they had been speaking. They had made the child tell the story. But they could not take it away from her, she thought, with a great rush of gladness, pressing her hand instinctively upon the pocket where the precious missive still lay hidden. She had hastened her steps ; she murmured something, she hardly knew what, as she left them and ran down the stairs and across the veranda. She feared nothing at this moment ; she desired nothing but one little half hour of undisturbed solitude.

She left the table before the others, slipping out quietly from her seat, which was near the door. Not once did she pause or glance to the right or left until she had gained her own room, and fastened the door behind her. Not even Clary should enter now.

She drew the note from her pocket. How she had longed for it! He might have written to her openly. She had scanned the letters day after day in eager hope, but in vain. She had tried not to be impatient. She had striven to banish her fears. She held the letter in her hand, stroking it gently. How would he write to her? She had never received a letter in her life except from Delphine, or Jack, or Josie Durant. This would be quite different; and so, at last, full of hope and happiness, and a wondering as to what it contained, which enhanced both, she opened the letter and spread it out before her.

"DEAR KATEY," it began — as Jack or Delphine might have written; but the words held a new significance — "I *must* see you. Something has happened, and I am going away. Send me a line by the bearer (if the stupid little fool ever gives this to you). If I do not hear from you, telling me where and when I can see you to-day, I shall be in the school-garden to-night at nine o'clock. *Do not fail to meet me.* If you do, I shall appear in the school-room at prayers, by way of the garden and veranda. The long window opening upon the veranda was left unfastened last night. Did you know it? I am inclined to attend prayers in order to confound Dyce. What unlucky star ever sent you to his school? I did not recognize him that day upon the street, though he knew me. It came to me afterwards. He lived in Boston for years — always, indeed, until he went abroad. My youthful career is perfectly familiar to him, and probably my later exploits. But if he makes you uncomfortable in any way, I'll — well, anything you choose. I know

your window, Katey-did. You stood a long while before it last night. You should have been sleeping, young woman, to keep the dusky eyes bright. Ah, Katey, Katey, it would be better if I had gone without seeing you. It would be better for you if I had never seen you at all. But do come to me this once. *I must see you.* D."

The letter fell out of her hands. What did it mean? What had happened? and where was he going? O, she must see him indeed; she would write to him at once. Then she remembered that the time for that had passed. He would come to the garden, expecting to meet her there, and she must steal out to him like a thief in the night! There was no help for it now.

There was a sweep of trailing gowns outside; high-pitched voices echoed through the hall; doors opened and shut; already the girls were preparing for a descent to the dull festivities. She thrust the letter into her pocket as a low rap sounded upon the door.

"O, please," begged Clary Luckiwinner, entering timidly, "will you tie my sash? But you are not dressed! Are you not going down?"

"Don't wait for me," Katey replied; "I fear I shall be late."

"But you will wear some of my flowers?"

And Clary, prodigal of sweets, dropped a handful of blossoms upon Katey's dressing-table as she hastened away.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE RED ROSE CRIES, "SHE IS NEAR, SHE IS NEAR." AND
THE WHITE ROSE WEEPS, "SHE IS LATE."

THE company had gathered in the music-room and the library adjoining; the girls were grouped about one of the pianos, with Professor Grôte darting here and there, arranging the music, whispering a suggestion, and finally taking his place behind the player, and signifying by an upward motion of his head and *bâton* that the madrigal, rehearsed so often for a month past, might now begin. Katey, drawing back behind Professor Paine, glanced at the clock just over Professor Grôte's head. The minute and the hour hand had almost met at nine. The time had come. She must slip away now while they were singing. Refreshments would follow, and she would not be missed for a little time. But still she did not go. She only stood quite still, staring as though fascinated at the hands of the clock, while the song the girls were chanting rang through her head:—

"I love my lové in the morning,
For she, like the morn, is fair — is fair."

At the last moment her courage had failed her, and yet she must go.

Professor Dyce, standing just within the library door,

watched her curiously. What had suddenly checked the very breath, as it seemed, upon her lips? At what was the girl staring with such intent and almost frightened gaze? When he looked again she was gone. She had opened the door behind her, and crossed the veranda to the school-room. A pile of shawls lay upon one of the desks here; she caught up one as she passed, wrapped it about her, and then ran down the stairs leading to the class-rooms, at the foot of which was a door opening under the high veranda upon the garden. The hall was dark; but the door once found, it was easy to turn the key in the lock. The cool evening air touched her face. There was a faint rustling outside. But it was only the dead leaves of the woodbine swirled by a sudden gust of wind. The garden was not an inviting place at its best, and was gloomy enough at this hour. It was raised above the street, from which it was separated by a wall. This wall, with a row of half-dead poplars, extended also across one side, shutting it in from its neighbors. The two school-buildings completed the square. The ground was irregular and grass-grown, showing by daylight faint traces of paths and flower-beds. It was denuded of everything now, save these old poplars and a clump of willows overhanging the street close by the school-buildings.

She gathered the white drapery of her gown about her, and listened a moment before stepping out. There was no sound from the veranda, and the windows of the practising-closets, overlooking the garden, were silent and dark. A form moved out from the clump of willows, and came to meet her. What if it should not be Dacre, after all? He caught her as she shrank back.

"Katey? Why, how white you are — even to your face! Did I frighten you?"

"O, how dared you come?" she exclaimed.

"Dared!" He laughed scornfully. "I tell you, Katey, if you had not met me I would have —"

"Hush! hush!" for his voice had risen dangerously.

"Come away, then;" and he led her down to the foot of the garden.

Overhead the stars shone bright and clear; but a soft, dusky cloud seemed to have dropped upon the earth. Was it this which had suddenly come between them? The slender branches of the willows stirred with a faint, sighing sound; a fitful wind rustled the dead leaves upon the grass; a passing step below lagged, and paused, then went on, growing faint at last in the distance.

"What are they doing in there?" Dacre motioned towards the house.

"They were singing when I came out. I can only stay a moment; they would miss me," she added, quickly.

"And if they did? — if they found you here —"

"I should be disgraced before them all."

"For *me*;" and there was something like triumph in his voice.

"It would do nothing for you," she said, sadly.

She had been filled with apprehension, and yet with a strange joy at the thought of seeing him again. Does anything ever come to us as we dream it will? Was it because of this other, lesser fear of being found here — of being shamed before the school — that even the wonder and anxiety which his note awakened had

fled now, and she was conscious only — of what? Was it disappointment?

"A plague on respectability; it is too delicate a garment for me," he said, with a laugh which jarred upon Katey even more than the words. "I threw mine away some time ago."

"Hush!" she said again. "It pains me to hear you speak so, even in a jest. Tell me about all these weeks since I saw you last. I have only a moment to stay."

"Tell *you*?" he said, turning upon her fiercely. "You don't know what you ask. You have not heard, then? They have not written you?" he went on, eagerly.

"I have heard nothing but what you yourself wrote me." All her anxiety returned now. "O, what has happened? Where are you going?"

But he did not seem to hear her question. "They will say hard things of me, I know; but, Katey," and he clutched her arm so that with difficulty she refrained from crying out, "you will not believe them?"

Was it the pain brought the sob with her words? "I will believe *you*. Tell me the truth. Tell me now, Dacre."

Suddenly the sound of voices broke out into the night. There was the sweeping of garments over the veranda. "I must go," whispered Katey. "I have staid too long. But don't leave me so. Come to the house, and ask for me to-morrow."

"Come to the house! Not I. Do you go to church ever in the evening?"

"Yes."

"And alone?"

"Sometimes."

"I'll see you then to-morrow night. No matter when and where; I shall not miss you." He swung himself over the wall, and disappeared.

The voices had ceased. It was only a party of girls crossing the veranda. They had passed on, and the place was still again. Katey stood for a moment leaning against the wall where he had left her. And this was the meeting she had looked forward to for weeks past! This was the new life which was to come to him through her! What had happened to him she could not tell, but no good, she was sure. And for the first time she realized the burden she had taken upon herself—realized how little she could hope to influence him, and how ready he was to fall into the old channels which, led, she knew not where, but away from everything good, and honest, and true. But she had known something of this from the first, if she had only paused to think, if she had only acknowledged it to herself; should she turn away from him, now that he was in trouble? O, no; never! She would be true to him in the face of the whole world, though her heart was heavy and sad, and full of forebodings as she made the vow. She crossed the garden, locked the door behind her, and ran up the stairs without meeting any one. It was only when her hand was upon the door of the music-room that she remembered the shawl still wrapped about her shoulders. She carried it back to the desk where she had found it. Then she saw that the pretty white gown, whose folds she held, was wet with dew. She shook it out while she waited a moment to still her hurried breathing before joining the others.

The music-room was quite deserted; the company had returned to the parlors. As she stood a moment in the library, where some of the girls lingered, a voice spoke in her ear, "What a fine color! Pray where did you find it?" She turned, and met Miss Wormley's face drawn into a smile that was more than half a sneer. "Ah, what a pity! You have stained your gown." It was true; the slimy moss from the wall had left its mark. "It is still quite fresh; let me remove it;" and she took out her handkerchief.

"Don't trouble yourself; it is nothing," Katey replied, coldly; but growing red and white by turns as she drew her dress away, while the girls, grouped about eating their ices, looked up to wonder, not understanding this by-play. There had been another silent witness of the scene, who came forward now. "Allow me; you have not been served, I see," Professor Dyce said, putting a plate into Katey's hand. He seemed to have forgotten his annoyance at her stupidity the other evening, as well as the part of spy he had played the day before, as, turning his back upon and quite ignoring Miss Wormley, he chatted gravely, but graciously, for the few moments before the breaking up of the company—about what she could not have told. She only felt grateful that his words called for rare and brief response, and served to banish her tormentor.

She was passing through the music-room on her way to breakfast the next morning, when President Humphrey called to her from the library.

"Pray, calm your fears," he said, as she answered the summons with a sinking heart, which showed itself in her startled face; "we have no fault to find with you—have we, Dyce?"

Then she saw that Professor Dyce was writing before the table by the window. "I beg your pardon?" he said, interrogatively, raising his eyes for an instant, and then returning to his writing again.

The president laughed as he shuffled the letters in his hand. He was greatly amused at the awe he fancied his presence had inspired in the mind of his junior teacher. "Miss Katherine Earle," he read, selecting one. "It was for this I called you back, not to scold you. Dyce, here, gives me a very good account of your stewardship." So he had praised her! The pen had ceased to scratch over the paper at the other end of the room. Professor Dyce raised his head. "You have managed your classes exceedingly well," he said.

That was all! There was a reservation, she felt, in his tone and his commendation. She made a little comprehensive courtesy as she received her letter. It might imply thanks, if he chose to consider it so; at least it hid the tears which sprang to her eyes. Then she quitted the room.

The letter was from Delphine. She had recognized the handwriting even before the president gave it to her. She remembered Dacre's words, "Delphine or Jack will write you." Then came the appeal, "But you will not believe them!" What was she not to believe? She had hardly courage to open the letter when she was once locked into her room. Here she might stay through all the morning, alone. It was not her turn to take the girls to church, and her absence would not be remarked upon.

"My dear Katey," the letter said, "how dreadful it is that Dacre Home should be involved in that bank

affair ! I really can think of nothing else. The cashier told Robert that he doubted if it could be proved that he was one of the gang ; but there was no doubt about it in his own mind. They have caught some of them, as you may have heard. I cannot but hope he may escape, however. It would be so painful for the family—even if he were not convicted. And to think we have known him so well ! Of course, now, we shall never see him again. I am sorry we met him so often at the sea-side ; indeed, I regret that he ever came there at all. I used to fancy sometimes that he was fond of you ; I fairly shudder at the thought ; and yet, how foolish to refer to it ; I was mistaken, of course. But how shocking it is ! Where he is now, no one knows. It is supposed that he has escaped to Canada. But enough of this ;” and she proceeded to speak of other matters, which were as sticks and straws to poor Katey, who stared at the words, taking in nothing of their meaning. As to the first part of the letter, it was impressed as by fire upon her brain. They all condemned him ; they all believed him guilty ; but there rose within her a conviction, a blessed conviction, without which she felt she must have fallen where she stood, that he had spoken the truth to her the night before, and that he was innocent. Nothing should shake her in this belief.

And Delphine had fancied he was fond of her ; but acknowledged now that she had been mistaken ! Delphine, who had encouraged him ; who had talked to her of how cruel society had been to this handsome boy ; who had sat through all the long summer days with her hands folded in her lap, giving countenance to the pretty play which seemed to end like a tragedy ;

who had even pleaded with her for him! Had she forgotten it all? In truth, poor Delphine had written from her perplexity and self-reproach, hoping, by ignoring the past, to warn her of the future, if, indeed, warning were necessary. But she misjudged Katey. To one who has enlisted heart and soul in a warfare, the time to waver is not when the foe appears; to one who has really taken upon himself vows, the time to doubt is not when the rack is brought out. She would never desert him now.

She folded up the letter, and laid it away. She was dizzy and ill, — and yet she must not be ill. She must see him to-night, at any cost. She would rest now; and she crept into bed, forcing herself to compose her body and close her eyes, and so she lay through all the long morning. Sleep was impossible; but she would rest, she said over and over again. Clary came at noon, and brought a cup of tea, and at night she rose and dressed herself, and went down with the others.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A CHAIN TO WEAR.

"O YOU are going out!" exclaimed Clary, in a tone of disappointment, as Katey passed her open door, an hour after tea, dressed for the street.

"Yes," Katey replied. She would not say "to church," though the words sprang to her lips. She felt that she should not go to church. Then she went on hurriedly, lest Clary should question her further. As she crossed the music-room, the door at the foot of the stairs, which led to the dormitories above, opened, and some one brushed past her. It was Miss Wormley, attired in her hat and shawl, and evidently on her way to the street. The sight brought a momentary surprise, for Miss Wormley, Katey knew, was in the habit of gathering the girls upon her hall into a Bible class Sabbath evenings. The library was empty, the door of the school-parlor was half open; before one of the windows stood Miss Wormley, who had not yet gone out, fastening her glove. But Katey did not glance in. She opened the outer door, and descended the high steps. No one was in sight; the sky was overcast, and already the twilight had gathered. What if she should miss him, after all? She moved slowly up the street, hearing the faint echo of a step behind her. Did it follow her? It drew nearer,

gaining upon her each moment. It was Dacre, she knew now, and turned to meet him. He took her hand and laid it in his arm without speaking. Even in the dim light she could see how haggard, and worn, and changed was his face. He was hunted, she knew. Even now his pursuers might be upon his track. Involuntarily she drew near to him. Lights were beginning to shine in the windows along the street, where the curtains were not yet drawn. There were mothers with children in their arms, there were children alone, and once she caught a glimpse of two lovers, sitting within the circle of soft light, with clasped hands and heads bent close together,—while Dacre and she wandered on up the deserted street in the dreary darkness. Did he wait for her to speak?

“I have had a letter from Delphine,” she said, at last.

Her hand was within his arm. She felt him start.

“She told a hard story, I’ll warrant,” he said, doggedly.

“She told no story at all. She referred to—to what had happened, as though I knew it already; and she said—”

“That I did it,” broke in Dacre. “I had nothing to do with it. I tell you, Katey, I knew nothing at all about it until it was over.”

Some one passing upon the other side of the street paused, as if to listen, as the excited voice rose above the stillness of the Sabbath night.

“O, come away;” and Katey hastened her steps. “Do come away;” and she drew him on up the street. Had some one followed them? But no; the step sounded again upon the walk, over the way, slowly retreating.

"What did she say, then?"

"That you were suspected."

"But I was ten miles from the place."

"Then why was your name mentioned?"

"Because I had been seen, occasionally, with Blake and Dugan, who were caught."

So these were his associates! A companion of thieves!

"And these were your friends!" she said. "O, Dacre! Dacre!"

"Yes, I know," he answered, moodily, "you are prejudiced, like every one else. But a man must have some friends, and they are not so bad, after all. Poor Katey!" he went on, more gently. "I would have kept it from you if I could. I might, but for Delphine's cursed interference. The world has cast me off, Katey. I stand upon one side, and you upon the other. There is a sea between us."

"Because you have drifted away. Come back. O, it is so cruel! it breaks my heart!" she cried. They had gone on without aim or purpose, turning into one street after another, and descending the hill again at last. The wall of the school garden, which Dacre had scaled the night before, rose beside them now. Katey's violent sobs attracted the attention of a plainly-dressed woman, who looked back as she passed. Dacre drew her across the street, where no flaring light lit up the darkness. Here was a church in process of erection. The confusion of brick and stone rendered the walk almost impassable. They threaded their tortuous way to the great arched door, where they could find a shelter and a screen. Katey sank down upon the stone threshold, and buried her head

in her arms. "Don't," Dacre said, impatiently, laying a heavy hand upon her shoulder ; "I hate to see a woman cry."

She strove hard to control herself. She raised her face, all wet with tears. "It was the disappointment and the pain," she said. "I thought it would be different, and it is so dreadful to bear ! Try to be patient with me, Dacre ; *it is all so dreadful to bear !*"

"Why don't you curse me, and wash your hands of me, then, like the rest of them ?"

He did not mean to be cruel ; he was beside himself with remorse and anxiety, and a shame he would not own.

"How could I ?" she replied, with a kind of wonder in her eyes.

His face dropped into his hands. He was not ashamed to be ashamed at last. "I am not worth one of your tears," he said. "I'll tell you the truth now, if never again : You are wild to care for me. It can bring you nothing but unhappiness. Forget that you ever knew me ; leave me to go to my own place alone. I shall find it soon enough," he added, bitterly.

"It is too late for that, unless—are you tired of me, Dacre ? Am I a burden to you ?"

"Tired of you ! Good God Katey ! don't tempt a man. Think a moment. Let me be honest with you for once. Think what all this will bring upon you. If you keep faith with me, there will be a secret to carry,—for years, perhaps ; and what a reward at last !—to bear my name and share in my disgrace !"

She shook her head. "I cannot give you up."

"Then come away with me !" he exclaimed, stretching out his arms to her. "Marry me to-night. Be-

fore morning I must be miles from here. What do you care for those stupid prigs over there?" motioning towards the school. "What are they to you? Nothing at all. Jack and Delphine have their own interests; you are alone in the world. Come!"

Why should she not? Had not Delphine made the path plain before her feet? And Jack was lost to her now; he had Josie Durant. As for the disgrace that would follow—the handsome, passionate, pleading face, turned towards her with the outstretched hands, made that to weigh as a straw only in the balance. There are moments when the world seems to drop away, leaving two to stand alone,—moments when worldly opinions count for nothing. How would it be with him? How with her? That was all.

"Tell me," she said, "should we go alone, you and I? Where are these men whom Delphine wrote were with you?"

He hesitated. "Yes, we should go alone. At least, you need never see or know them."

She caught his arm in sudden terror. "They are taking you away!" she said, and her voice was like a cry. "They would take you away from me! What could I do against them? O, stay and face it all. If you love me, stay. I would never desert you, not even at the worst."

"But you don't know,—you don't realize. Why, Katey, they might put me in prison!"

"How could they, if you were innocent? Or, if they did, it would not be for long. There are worse fates than prisons over innocent men. We wouldn't mind it;" and she drew near to him as she spoke. "Perhaps, then, these dreadful people who lead you

on would forget you. And, after a while, we would come out," she said, almost brightly, "and go away somewhere, the world is so wide, you know ; we'd go away where no one knew us, and begin again. Or, if we chose, since you are innocent, we need not be ashamed to stay, and live it down."

"You true girl!" But he turned away from her "It cannot be. I told you, Katey, there was a sea between us ; and well for you. You are right," he added, sadly ; "it would be madness for you to go with me. I was a wretch to ask it."

A man had been moving back and forth upon the opposite side of the street, so stealthily that they had not noticed him. As they stepped out from the arched doorway, he went on slowly, giving a low, peculiar whistle. Dacre started. "I must go," he said. Again the signal came. It caught Katey's ear. "Do they call you?" she gasped, growing white. "Have they come for you? O, don't go. Don't go. I'll do anything, go anywhere, only don't let them take you away." She threw her arms about his neck, as though her feeble strength could hold him.

"Hush, hush ! it is too late for that ;" and he strove gently to free himself. "Hush, child ; poor girl ! Be brave, Katey, for I must leave you now." The street was beginning to fill with people. The churches were out. Katey heard the moving feet upon the walk. She raised her white face. "Then you will go," she said, with strange calmness.

"I *must* ;" and she pleaded no more.

As they passed up the side street leading to the house, followed by the dusky figure which had been groping along in the shadow of the wall, a woman's

skirt brushed them. A dull, pallid face, with blinking, red-rimmed eyes, was turned towards them for an instant, as Miss Wormley hastened by.

O, what did Katey care if they all saw her — if they all knew? Nothing, at this moment. "Leave me here," she said, when they had reached the corner. She could see that crouching figure over the way, — like an evil spirit dogging their footsteps. But Dacre went on to the high stone steps. "If they see me from the house, they'll only think you have a friend, Katey. They will never imagine that I am your worst enemy," he added, bitterly.

The figure over the way moved out from the shadow of the doorway, where it had been hidden, and crossed the street towards them. Katey clutched Dacre's arm. He, too, saw it draw near. The last moment had come, the parting more cruel than death — holding out no hope for the future. He caught her cold hands in his as she stood upon the steps above him. "Kiss me, Katey," he said, hoarsely. She heeded neither the figure moving towards them, nor the passers upon the street. The windows of the house might be opened wide. What did it matter to her though all the world should see? She stooped and kissed him. "My heart will break," she said. Then in a moment he was gone, the door had closed upon her, and she was flying, as though pursued, through the house, across the veranda, up the stairs to her own room.

CHAPTER XIX.

FAR FROM THE EYES, FAR FROM THE HEART !

THE days were shortening now, and growing cold. A rime covered the grass of the garden in the early morning. The elms had scattered all their leaves, and the Virginia creeper against the wall moved thin, bare arms in the chilling autumn wind. The wide veranda was deserted. The girls gathered, after school hours, about the high stove in the music-room, or in the wide dormitory halls. In the classrooms everything moved on with tedious regularity. Katey discharged her duties with conscientious fidelity, the more from knowing how little of her heart was in them. O, the inexpressible anxiety and yearning of these days ! like that of the apostle, who could wish himself accursed for the sake of his brethren. It seemed to her that she could have borne the torments of the lost, if by that means Dacre might be drawn from the dangers which surrounded him. He had disregarded her prayers and tears ; he had chosen to go away from her ; he had deliberately taken up with a life which must lead, sooner or later, to crime. He had joined hands with those who set themselves against society, who hold that any weapons are lawful and fair in the warfare they wage with authority — and yet she could not give him up. She looked forward

to no happy future, she saw no light in the darkness, and yet she held fast to her promise and to him. She could bear not to be happy, she could miss of blessedness, if she could only rescue him from the snares which held him. So far she had failed of accomplishing her desire. She had done what she could, and it had not availed. She knew nothing of him now. He had written one brief note, post-marked she could not tell where, full of self-reproach for the wrong he was doing her, but with no hint or suggestion of plans, associates, or surroundings. To this she had replied at once, as he desired her to do, under cover of another name, to a town where she was confident he was not.

A month had passed since then, and she had heard nothing. She could do nothing but wait—and pray. She had read of men turned in the midst of their sins by a mighty arm. Was it not possible now? O, if she could but have the faith to believe, might it not be so? Many times in the day she breathed her liturgy of confession and supplication. It bore always the same burden, but yet lost never its fervent spirit and strong desire. But, above all, did she not forget it at church, when the whole congregation knelt,—the girls whispering and staring though upon their knees; it seemed as though He would be more inclined to hear and heed when the minister and the people prayed together.

Professor Dyce marked her in these days,—a gray-clad figure, with a face growing whiter and more absorbed every day,—slipping away from the table before he had left his place, stealing through the music-room in the early twilight like a ghost, too

unreal to be addressed, who would vanish away if approached.

She seldom came down now to the Friday evening readings when he sat in the desk; but the early morning prayers, when the letters were distributed, always found her in her place — one of the last desks in the room, which no one of the girls had chosen. He felt the great dark eyes fixed upon him with a painfully eager expression as he turned over the pile of letters, reading the name upon each aloud as he spread them out. He knew that the face grew still whiter, the lines about the mouth more tense, as one after another was laid down, even to the last. Then in the confusion, as the girls rose, she vanished away.

He knew more than she dreamed of his knowing. He had never forgotten the day when he met her upon the street with Dacre Home, when her face told its own story. "Ah, poor girl, is it so?" he had said to himself, struck by the face, and knowing Dacre Home. He had been inclined to think his pity wasted when he met her again, decked out so fantastically at the Junction; and yet, later, when she appeared so unexpectedly at the school, when, too bewildered to act, he had waited and watched, he had been inclined to doubt again his judgment. Now, reading of this bank robbery, which had been blazoned to the world through the newspapers, and being privately advised that Dacre Home was implicated, though his name had not appeared, he thought, first of all, of the effect upon this inexplicable girl. He marked her uneasiness the night of the school reception, he missed her from the room, and overheard Miss Wormley's mali-

cious comments upon her return. He even interfered to rid her of them, pitying her confusion. He hated himself for unconsciously watching her; he hated Miss Wormley still more for slyly underrating her at every opportunity. The morning after passing Katey and Dacre upon the street that Sabbath evening, when, in fact, suspecting something, and following her, she had seen the meeting, heard Katey's irrepressible sobs, and, peering from the darkened windows of the school parlor, been shocked at the manner in which they parted, — Miss Wormley sought Professor Dyce, and, in the absence of the president, laid the whole matter before him.

He heard her general remarks without suspecting their bearing, — her observations upon teachers who were given to clandestine meetings in the garden, who wept upon the shoulders of young men, and kissed them voluntarily at parting, — yes, actually kissed them from the very steps of the house, where any one might see. Then, at last, she spoke Katey's name.

The professor was sitting before the desk in his study. He had laid down his pen reluctantly to listen to her story. Complaints from Miss Wormley's lips were by no means rare, and he gave little heed to what she was saying. But at the mention of this name he flushed so fierce a red, he sprang so suddenly to his feet, that she started back in dismay.

"Woman!" he said, in a startling voice, "have you no shame? What are Miss Earle's friends to you or me, that we should play the spy upon her?" He pointed to the door, and she went out, but not before

she had turned, in her anger at being foiled, and vowed to be revenged.

The professor paced the floor with rapid strides when the door closed after her. He tried not to recall what she had said; but every word, carelessly as he had heard it, stood out now as though in alto-relievo. The various circumstances wove themselves together in his mind, and it was Dacre Home, he knew, whom Miss Wormley had seen with Katey. Was the girl bereft of her senses? Had she no friends to warn her?

The wind and rain beat dismally against the window-panes of the school-room, where, in the chill, gray morning light, the girls had gathered for prayers, the curls pinned up hastily, the pretty feminine fineries not yet assumed, as one after another straggled down from the dormitories above, or ran across the veranda from the other house.

A tall, slight figure, wrapped in a little red shawl, stole down the broad, winding stairs at the end of the room, and took its accustomed place before one of the last desks, as Professor Dyce, moving the pile of waiting letters aside, opened the Bible before him to find the morning lesson.

Katey closed her eyes, and, compressing her lips, waited. It would be a long chapter, — fifty verses, perhaps, which the girls would drone responsively, — about the Jews; for the morning lessons were from the Old Testament; and the Jews seemed so far away! She waited for the voice to begin — to hear how such a king slew his thousands, and another his tens of thousands. O, how could she wait? God forgive her, she did not want to hear of the triumphs of

His people; she only wanted in her own hands for a moment that pile of little white forget-me-nots, lying upon the desk.

The professor's voice — solemn, deep, low — made a hush to fall upon the room. "Little children, let no man deceive you; He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil."

Katey's heart stood still. This was not the Jews. She raised her head and fixed her wistful eyes upon the reader. If there would only come some word to her! "He that committeth sin is of the devil." Not Dacre — it could not mean Dacre!

Again the words caught her ear, "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."

And so she would gladly, God knew. Yes, this was for her.

Her heart was lighter than it had been for weeks. Even when the letters were taken up, and the names read aloud slowly, though the blood sprang to her face as her heart gave a great throb, she tried to still its beating. "I can wait," she said to herself, while the flush slowly died away as one name after another fell upon her ear. "*It will come*" — the answer to the prayer. The girls rose; there was confusion slowly settling into silence as those who had no letters hastened away, and the others soon followed. Katey lingered: The shadow of disappointment had fallen upon her; only the shadow, not the heavy weight which had crushed her during so many weeks that were past. "I can wait," she was saying to herself

over and over again. The answer will surely come. But if it could be soon !

It was chilly in the school-room, and disappointment is a chill. She wrapped the little shawl close about her, and let her head rest again upon the desk as it had lain in prayer time. A movement at the farther end of the room interrupted the stillness. She raised her head quickly ; she had thought herself alone. It was only Professor Dyce, who had not gone, it seemed. He laid the papers he had been arranging within the desk, turned the key, and descended from the platform. As he did so, his glance fell upon Katey, who had risen, undecided by which mode of exit she should leave the room, ashamed to make use of the stairs behind her, lest she should appear to flee from him. He decided the question by walking directly down the aisle. The movement was so deliberate, that she judged him to have a conscious purpose in seeking her. It was something in regard to her classes, undoubtedly, and she ran them over hurriedly in her mind, to recall, if possible, where she had been remiss or failed in her duty. But he seemed in no haste to enter upon the subject.

" You have appropriated this corner to yourself ? " he began, graciously, making a slight motion with his hand for Katey to resume her seat.

" I come here sometimes to read ; it is very quiet out of school hours, when the girls are gone," she stammered, thinking what a refuge this place had been. But of that she could not speak.

" But your room — do the girls intrude upon you there ? "

" They are always welcome."

"Yes, I know;" and he smiled a little sarcastically. "That is the formula one is expected to repeat. Still there is a limit to all hospitality. You come here to read," he repeated. "You do not go to the library, then?"

"O, yes, every day, to look over the newspapers," she replied, quickly. Then she blushed, feeling his keen eyes upon her. Did he know about Dacre?

"I should hardly think the detail of crimes and casualties with which our press is filled just now would interest you. That bank robbery, by the way, was a bold operation. Planned and executed evidently by experienced burglars. Strange how these outlaws sit before the gates of society, ready to spring in wherever there are signs of weakness." He had removed his eyes from the bent head and trembling hands which held tight the little shawl. "What can be done with this class?" he added, gently — "except to fight and keep it at bay?"

The question so vital carried the girl beyond herself. "O, what can be done?" she repeated, eagerly, forgetting her caution, and showing all her heart.

"Believe me, nothing — by such as you," he replied, earnestly — so earnestly that she could not fail to comprehend his meaning. "Association is contamination; and think of the inequality: it is one against a thousand. For they are banded together like an army."

A strange light shone in Katey's face, as though the sun had risen suddenly upon her. One against a thousand! But one and God could overcome a thousand.

He wondered what should cause the radiance in her countenance. Certainly not his words. He could not understand the girl.

The first mutterings of the distant gong reached their ears. Katey rose hastily, and with a little obeisance slipped away up the stairs behind her.

CHAPTER XX.

“AND ONE WAS FAR APART, AND ONE WAS NEAR.”

THE Christmas holidays brought a change; many of the girls went home; Jack's wedding called Katey to Easton, where was Josie Durant's home. She was sitting in Josie's own room after the ceremony, in the midst of the confusion incident upon a wedding, a journey, and a final departure from home. The satin gown, fluffy with lace, the delicate veil and wreath of orange blossoms, prepared with such care, were thrown carelessly now upon the bed; the dainty slippers, in which the dainty little lady had stepped from familiar girl-land over the boundary into a strange and wonderful country, dropped where the little feet had left them. The bride was arrayed in her traveling costume, for the wedding breakfast was over, and the guests, with the exception of a few most familiar friends, had gone. She was putting the last touches to her toilet at this moment, settling the elegant little bonnet upon her head, and fastening her gloves. “Please, Katey,” she said, holding out her wrist.

“It brings back the first time I ever saw you, to know you at all,” Katey said, taking the little hand in her own. “I buttoned your glove then — do you remember? The night of Janie Home's party.”

"How odd that you should have remembered such a little thing," Josie replied. "No, I don't recall it. But I remember Jack and you. Who ever would have thought then that Jack and I would grow up to marry each other?" Josie was little given to dreaming, but she fell into a reverie over this.

"It is all strange," said Katey; and there was a tone of sadness in her voice. Josie gave her a sharp, anxious glance.

"Are you quite well, dear?"

"O, yes."

"I fancied you were thinner than you used to be." She crossed the room upon some pretext. When she returned, she paused behind Katey's chair, and, leaning over, clasped the little gloved hands loosely about her neck. "There is something I have wanted to speak of ever since you came. But the house has been so full of company that we have never had a moment alone."

Katey made no reply. She had looked for this, and braced herself to meet it, every day since her arrival. She had ceased to expect it now, believing the whole matter to have slipped from the mind of her friend.

"You have heard of that bank robbery, of course," Josie went on, timidly, feeling her way, as it were. "And you know what is said of Dacre?"

"But it is not true," Katey burst out. "There is no truth in it. He was miles away when the bank was broken into;" and freeing herself hastily, she rose up and walked away to the window.

"What do you mean?" Josie's face fairly paled with affright. "O, Katey! You have not seen him?"

But Katey had made her denial, and would say no

more. She had promised to keep his visit a secret. Had she not almost broken that promise in her eagerness to defend him? There was the rattle of wheels under the window. Jack tapped at the door. "The carriage, Josie. Are you ready?"

"Yes, in one moment."

She drew Katey's face down and kissed her. "You will not trust me, but — tell Jack," she said.

Katey shook her head without speaking. Her eyes were full of tears.

"But you have seen him?" persisted Josie.

"Don't ask me; I can't tell you;" and yet was this not almost admitting the truth? "There is nothing to tell," she added, hastily.

"Where is he?"

"I don't know, indeed. But O, I wish I did!" she exclaimed, breaking down at last, and sobbing outright.

"O, dear! what can I do?" Josie stared at her, troubled and helpless, as a chorus of voices from below called to her impatiently.

"There is nothing to do," Katey said, checking her sobs. "Don't think of it again."

"But I am afraid to go away. I don't know what may happen to you."

"Nothing dreadful, you may be sure," Katey replied, with a hysterical laugh. She was angry and ashamed at having thus betrayed her feelings. "I shall neither run away nor drown myself, you may be sure; nor do anything else unusual. I am only tired and nervous. Don't think about it;" and she hastened to open the door.

Tears are by no means unusual at a wedding, and

Katey's wet eyes passed unnoticed. Only Jack marked them, and reproached himself for having almost forgotten her in his happiness. "Remember, you are to come and live with us," he said, leaning out from the carriage. "Delphine, do keep Katey; lock her in, if necessary, until we return." Then the carriage door closed with a bang, and in a gust of slippers the wedding party disappeared.

"It is absurd," Delphine said, the next morning, as they sat alone over the early breakfast, prepared in anticipation of Katey's departure by the first train. "It is positively unreasonable for you to tie yourself to that horrid school. Think, if Robert and I go abroad next month, I shall not see you again. You might, at least, go home with me for a week." But Katey felt that to be impossible. The term would commence the next day, and she must be in her place. And then, how did she know what had occurred in her absence? What if Dacre had come again? or there might be at least a letter awaiting her. O, no; she must go back at once.

"Dreadful, was it not, about Dacre Home?" Delphine remarked, carelessly, when this question of Katey's return to school had been discussed and settled, as it had been every day since she came.

"Yes," Katey replied, cautiously. She would be wiser than she had been with Josie.

"I was so glad to find you didn't care for him," Delphine went on in her pretty, hurried way. "I wouldn't own it in my letter, and I don't quite like to own it now, but I did half encourage his intimacy with you." She had made her confession at last.

"I know you did," Katey said, quietly.

"And if you had learned to care for him, I should never have forgiven myself."

"How do you know that I didn't learn to care for him?" was on her lips to ask; but she held back the question. Why should she distress Delphine, who intended it all for good, and had only failed in judgment? Still, one word she must speak, or her tongue would utter it of itself. A dangerous word! Nevertheless, she would dare much to defend the innocent and the absent.

"He had nothing to do with that robbery, I know," she began. "He may have associated with these men —"

"Which is bad enough," said Mrs. Estemere, who had not only lost all confidence in Dacre, but felt herself personally ill used by his making himself thus shamefully notorious after having visited at her house.

"It is, indeed," Katey was obliged to confess. "Still he had nothing to do with this, I am sure."

"About that, of course, we cannot judge; but it is all so thoroughly mortifying and disagreeable that we had better try to forget it and him;" and Mrs. Estemere rose from the table.

Mrs. Durant entered the room at the same moment, fortunately for Katey, whose prudence was fast deserting her; the carriage was announced, and further conversation was out of the question.

Delphine ran down the icy steps in her pink-bowed slippers for one more last word at the carriage door. "If I shouldn't see you again before we sail, you'll write often, and you'll take care of yourself, child? Don't do anything foolish, away off there. There are no young men?"

"Only one," laughed Katey, remembering Mr. Milde.

"Ah, well, you are the pattern of discretion." She leaned in at the carriage window to kiss her warmly, then ran away up the steps again.

The pattern of discretion! If she only knew! thought Katey, lying back in the carriage as it rolled away to the station.

It was almost night when she reached La Fayette and the Female College. One of the little girls ran after her as she passed the study-hall, to put a letter into her hand. She had not been sufficiently brave to walk into the room and look upon the desk for herself; she was fairly sick with anxiety. She took the letter without glancing at it, and hastened on. But when she had run the gantlet of teachers and scholars, and, shut into her own room, at last dared to turn it over and read its superscription, the second shock was greater than the first. It was not from Dacre at all; it was from Mina Hauser, she saw at once. Only a few lines written in haste to say they were in La Fayette for a couple of days, and hoped to see her. She looked at the date. It was three days before. She must seek them at once. It might now be too late. She hastened to retrace her steps through the house, ashamed of the indifference with which she had read Mina's announcement. But the disappointment had been bitter. She was dulled to everything save this: Where was Dacre? Why was it that she heard nothing from him? Even the warm greetings she met upon the way, as one group of girls after another was passed, brought no pleasure. She was ill, and cold, and despairing, and yet she went on to

seek her friends. There is an instinct which takes the place of volition at times, and sets us in the way where we ought to walk, and make us perform the acts expected of us, pulling the wires, and holding a mask before our faces.

She found the little hotel from which the letter had been written in one of the narrow streets of the town, down by the station. She was just in time; the well-worn trunks were strapped, and standing in the entrance hall. Wulf had already left the house, Christine and her father were coming down the stairs on their way to the street.

"Ah, is it possible?" cried the little old man. "We have sent twice to the school since Mina wrote, and each time they said you had not come back."

"I have but this moment returned," Katey replied, warmly kissing Christine, who seemed much brighter and stronger than when they met last. After all, it was pleasant to see them again. "I am sorry," the little old man went on, "but Christine has an errand she is obliged to do before we go, and we have no time to lose. However, Mina is here, and you will stay with her until we return."

"Ah, Katrine, is it you?" exclaimed Mina, flying down the dingy stairway to embrace her. She dragged her up the stairs to the stuffy little inn parlor, chattering all the time, asking a hundred questions, and waiting for no one of them to be answered. "And Christine?" Katey said, at last, when they had exhausted every other subject of mutual interest; when Mina had described their wanderings since she wrote, a month or two before, and mentioned the Shep-parts incidentally, but with a vivid blush over the

intelligence that Hans had won his place in the orchestra, and was coming to meet them at their next stopping-place.

"O, Christine is better. Don't you think so? And the young man of whom I told you has been to see her. I cannot understand it," Mina said, thoughtfully, "nor him. Something evidently weighed upon his mind. I overheard him once reproaching himself to her. He wished he was dead, he said; he brought only misery and wretchedness to everybody. And now he has gone away south. I don't know for what. But he has written once or twice to Christine."

"Poor Christine!" Katey thought, "she, too, has her troubles,"

"But, O, Katey!" Mina exclaimed, "I had almost forgotten what I wanted particularly to tell you." She went to the door and listened; then she came back, and drew a worn, crumpled envelope from her pocket. Do you know, I feel as though he had deceived us all the time as to his name."

"Why?"

"Because I picked this up from the floor one day; it had fallen from his pocket, and it does not bear his name at all."

"Perhaps the letter was not addressed to him."

"But why should he have it, then? I don't know;" and she shook her head slowly. "The handwriting is like yours," she said, suddenly rousing herself. "See!" and, leaning forward, she put the envelope into Katey's hand.

"Like mine, is it?" Katey said, with a little laugh, moving towards the window, so that the faint, last rays of daylight might fall upon it.

But the laugh died in her throat. Like hers? It was the cover of her own letter! And the name she read, while everything whirled around her, was—*Dacre Home!*

"Can't you make it out?" Mina called, from her corner by the fire. "I ought to have rung for lights; but we were going so soon."

"It can't be. There is some mistake," gasped Katey, finding her voice at last.

Mina came forward slowly. "I don't know; it is very strange. But how hoarse you are! I did not notice it before. And your hands are like ice. You ought not to have come. Sit down here, and warm yourself."

But Katey began in a flurried, absent way to fasten her cloak. "No, no, I must go back." She must go while she could. Presently, when she realized it all, she should drop down where she stood. All at once she paused. "Tell me about him. You have never described him to me." Perhaps she was mistaken, after all.

"Christine has his picture. I wish you might see it. Who knows? You may meet him somewhere, and learn something about him. He is tall—taller than Wulf, and has a little stoop about the shoulders. His hair is dark like yours, and his face is smooth. Then his eyes—"

"Yes," Katey said, faintly, "I know; now I will go home."

"But not before father and Christine come back?"

Christine? Katey had forgotten her. Yes, she must get away. How could she meet her? Something like pity struggled up from the chaos in her

mind ; or was it an instinct of caution made her say at the very last moment, when she left Mina down at the street door, " Don't tell Christine about the letter ; or not now, at least. Let us think about it first. It may all come right yet ; " though she knew already that it could never come right for her. And Mina promised, and suffered her to go, sure that she was ill, but not at all suspicious as to the truth.

The wind whirled through the tortuous streets, and held her back as she went on. The lowering clouds threw stinging showers of sleet down with the darkness ; but she did not heed it. She was numb to sound, and sight, and feeling. It might have been a summer night for all she knew. She had but one desire, one purpose : to get back, to hide from every prying, curious eye, and then — ah, no matter what came then. She let herself in at the door. There were voices in the school parlor ; a laugh came from across the hall. She hurried on. The lights burned dim in the deserted library ; in the music-room a group of girls hung about one of the pianos. " O, please, come and play for us to dance," they said. To dance ! She murmured something, and hastened on. The snow had fallen through the day, and drifted in upon the veranda. How cool and refreshing it was to her feet ! For now she burned as with an inward fire. Some one had called after her that the door was closed, she must go the other way ; but she had not listened. The long window was unfastened. She would not go back ; but, standing in the snow, made it slide up at her touch. " The long window opening upon the veranda was left unfastened last night ; did you know it ? " Dacre wrote once. She remembered

it now as she turned the spring. The school-room was dark and silent. She felt her way swiftly down its length to the stairway at the end, which led up and up again to her door.

She took off her outside garments, and hung them in their place. She was strangely tired, and there was a weight upon her brain. Why did she not feel any longer this which had so shocked and distressed her? She would think of it another time — in the morning; and so she crept to bed.

CHAPTER XXI.

"I AM NOT WELL IN HEALTH, AND THAT IS ALL."

WAS it morning? The light in the room seemed dim as Katey opened her eyes. But winter mornings have late twilights. It must be time to rise. The call to prayers would come soon, and there were the letters!

Some one moved out from behind the head of the bed, and bent over her. It was Clary Luckiwinner, mopping her tear-stained face with a lace-edged handkerchief.

"Why, Clary!"

"O, then you know me at last, dear Miss Earle! You have been dreadfully ill, and your sister is here, and—but O, I must not talk to you," she broke off, penitent and frightened.

Katey closed her eyes. She was so weak that this little scene exhausted and confused her. So Delphine was here! And she had been ill! Slowly her awakened thoughts travelled back to the point where forgetfulness began. Then she hid her face among the pillows.

Delphine came presently, and fed her with broth, and bade her go to sleep, like a good child. She could hear the girls whispering outside the door, where Clary had gone; but even this died away upon her ear, and

she lost herself again. How long a time passed she did not know. She slept and woke, and slept and woke again. Sometimes it was daylight upon which she opened her eyes, and sometimes a soft glimmer, as from a shaded lamp, filled the room ; and all the while she was slowly coming back to herself. How far she must have wandered in the darkness ! Her mind was growing clearer. The past rose up before her, as it might, perhaps, in the day of judgment, when every secret thought, as well as deed, would stand revealed. It had been all a lie from the beginning, she knew. He had come to her with a vow to another woman upon him. He had allowed himself to fall into temptation. He had been too weak to go away when safety lay only in flight. She herself had led him on. Unwittingly, she had been a snare to him, knowing nothing of the truth. She could see now how he had struggled, weakly. "I am your bitterest enemy," he said. Her bitterest enemy ! And yet she did not hate him. At this very moment, when she knew how false he had been, she felt that if he but stood in the door and beckoned, she should rise and follow him. O, he must not come ; she must never see him again. He could be nothing to her ; she must forget him. That would have been easy to do once ; but now — could she ever untangle these threads which had knit together the two lives ?

Delphine, in her rich, dark dress, with pretty shining ornaments about her neck and at her ears, sat by the little table holding a lamp, knitting a hood of soft, white wool. She rose hastily when Katey moved among her pillows.

"How good it was in you to come !" said Katey

stroking her hand, when she had submitted to being fed, like a baby, with a spoon. Poor Katey! Something had dropped out of her life, leaving it empty and bare. It seemed all at once as though the world were cruelly cold. The least kindness was a surprise.

"Of course I should come! What do you mean, child? I am thankful your illness occurred when it did, and not a month later, after we had gone. You don't know how sick you have been, Katey."

Delphine's voice quavered. She bent over her work.

"Did Jack know?"

"I wrote a despatch for him one day, but Robert said we had best not send it, unless —" She did not finish the sentence.

So they had thought she might die! It would have been better, perhaps. It would have been easier. Death settles many a vexed question. And yet there was something she desired to do first.

"Has it been long? Have I been ill a long time?"

"Nearly a fortnight."

"Have — have I had any letters, do you know?" Her voice trembled, in spite of the effort to speak calmly.

"Yes; Jack and Josie have both written. You shall hear their letters to-morrow."

"And that is all, — you are sure? There might be some mistake."

"Yes, O, yes, that is all."

From whom did the child expect letters? thought Delphine, carelessly. It was a sick girl's fancy, and she spoke of something else. But Katey did not reply. With her face hidden in the pillow, she was

trying to stifle the great pang of disappointment which Delphine's words had brought. And yet, why should she be disappointed? Only a moment before, she had been alarmed lest he had written to her with tender words; and then where would her strength be? She must write to him at once; she could not rest or sleep again till this was done. If she could only throw her arms around Delphine's neck, and tell her the whole story! But Delphine had been bitter in her denunciations of Dacre. It would be far easier to make Jack her confidant. Still, what might not Jack do in his wrath?

"I am going out for a little while," Mrs. Estemere said, presently, laying down her work. "I have an errand to do, and Miss Severance has kindly offered to go with me. Little Miss Luckiwinner will sit by you until I return. I shall caution her about talking too much."

So, after a few moments, Clary crept in to take her proud position beside the bed.

Mrs. Estemere's step had hardly died away before Katey turned to her. "Raise my head a little, Clary, and bring my writing-desk to me."

Clary stared in affright. Had Miss Earle lost her senses again?

"I want to write a letter," Katey explained.

"But you are not well enough. Mrs. Estemere said I was not to talk to you."

"I don't ask you to talk to me. Only bring me the desk. Please, Clary."

"O, I don't dare to," Clary replied, trembling with fright at her temerity, yet determined to be faithful to her trust. "You might be ill again and die," she

gasped. "O, I cannot, dear Miss Earle; don't ask me to. Wait until Mrs. Estemere comes back."

But Katey preferred that Delphine should know nothing of the letter. She had made her plan, counting upon Clary's weakness; but it had turned to strength. In vain she pleaded. Clary soon dissolved to tears, but, even in a liquid state, was firm. She resorted to reproaches, which poor Clary bore with no other reply than little sniffing sobs.

"Then I shall get it for myself," she said at last, with determination, making a movement as though about to rise from her pillows.

Clary wrung her hands in despair.

"Wait one moment. Will you not wait just one moment?" and she ran out of the room. Now was the time to execute her threat. But that was impossible, Katey knew. She was by far too weak. She had spent her little strength in the encounter with Clary. She could only lie quite still, crying weakly.

All at once Clary's little prim face, warmed into unusual life, appeared at the door.

"Then you didn't get up?" she exclaimed, and the head disappeared again. Once more it showed itself. What was the girl trying to do? "I went down to—to speak to somebody; and won't you please let him talk to you about it?" she said, confusedly. A taller form appeared behind Clary's little figure.

"May I come in?" and putting Clary aside, Professor Dyce entered the room.

"Miss Luckiwinner seems to think it an occasion demanding authority. What is this about writing letters?"

He came forward and took the hand lying upon the coverlet, holding the wrist a moment.

"Ah, this will not do," he said, gravely. "I thought we could trust to your good sense. You will bring back your fever in this way."

"But I wanted to write,—just a little note," she added, quickly. "I would be very quiet afterwards; I would never ask to do anything again. Only this once," she begged.

He was regarding her flushed face with grave, stern eyes; but at the quaver in her voice their expression changed.

"Could not Miss Clary, here, write for you? or I?" he asked, gently. So she had been crying; her eyes were still full of tears.

Katey shook her head.

"Bring me the desk," he said to Clary. She hesitated, but she gave it into his hands.

"May I open it?" He took out paper, and placed it before her; he selected a pencil, and began to point it deliberately. "Do the young ladies disturb you?"

"Not at all. They have been very quiet, I am sure. But my classes?"

"Wait in hope. In the mean time most of them have fallen into my hands. There," laying down the pencil, "this is to be a very brief epistle—only a line or two?"

"Yes."

"Then Miss Luckiwinner and I will leave you for a few moments;" and he ushered Clary from the room, closing the door, beside which Clary waited, however. The professor paced up and down the hall, his head bent, his hands clasped behind him. Clary, hearing no movement within the room, ventured to leave the

door and lean upon the window-sill at the end of the hall. The professor paused before her.

"Well, Clary," and the strong, bright tone which he had used in the sick room had left his voice, "it's all a tangle — isn't it?"

"What is, sir?"

"O, life, and — everything."

"I — I don't know," Clary replied, bewildered.

"No, of course you don't; why should you?" he said, cheerfully. Then he rapped at Katey's door.

"Come in." The flush had left her face; it was almost as white as the pillows about it. The letter was finished and enclosed, and lay, face down, upon the desk before her. "I was not a long time, you see," and she tried to smile.

"No."

"And now, will you send this? It is stamped and addressed, ready for the mail."

"Certainly," he replied, in so bright a tone that Clary was puzzled again. But every-day life held many mysteries to Clary. She never got in their unravelment beyond a dull, confused wonder, which shed no light upon them.

He held out his hand for the letter, but Katey still kept it clasped tight in her own. Would he read the address? There was an unspoken request in her eyes. "It need not be laid upon the desk with the others?" and the color swept over her face.

"Will you not trust me?" and she gave the letter into his hand.

"But you will not do this again? — not until you are stronger, at least; you will promise me?"

"I shall *never* do it again," burst out Katey, with a

little sob ; too weak and miserable to realize how much her words revealed. Then she turned her face to the wall, and he went away. But Clary added another to her list of unanswered queries : why did a great light come into his eyes at sight of Katey's tears ?

Delphine returned to find her patient quietly sleeping, and Clary ensconced in breathless, painful quiet in the great chair by the bedside. Evidently her commands had been carried out to the letter.

There was no opportunity at the time to recount the story of Katey's wilfulness, and Clary, after turning the matter over in her small head, decided to say nothing about it. She kept her own counsel, since no harm followed. Katey even seemed better the next day, and wondered in her own mind if she ought to confess her misdeed. But that would involve telling the whole story, from which she shrank now. She was morbidly faithful, perhaps. But, because he had proved false, was she set free from every promise ? They could never be anything to each other ; but she would not turn against him, and recount everything she knew to his disadvantage. Then, too, Delphine would divine at once the cause of her illness, and overwhelm her with pity and sympathy. Ah, no ; it would be wiser and more easy to bury it all in her own heart.

When she was able to be moved, Delphine carried her off to her own home. Jack and Josie had returned from their wedding journey, and were settled in the same town. Then, before many days, Delphine had bade them all a cheery adieu, — there was never any forebodings in her mind, — and sailed away with her husband and child for a year's absence. But Katey

was by this time domiciled with Josie, where she was to remain for the present, and where rest and new scenes would bring strength and peace, if not forgetfulness. And so the winter passed away, and spring came again.

What is this longing which came to Katey, and which possesses us all in the spring time ;—not for the distant future, but for the far away in the past. A vague regret, a shadowy remembrance tinged with pain of loss. It comes to us like a fuller heart-beat in the midst of busy cares. It holds us for an instant, then is gone. Not a recollection, for we grasp at nothing ; no picture rises before our minds. It is too brief, too mystical, for that. The rain drops upon the white stones under the window, and there falls upon heart and soul a sense of—what? Another patter of rain? When? and where? A sudden gust, and the breath of the salt sea is borne in upon us. Ah! we had almost grasped it ; we had almost lived again. What? We know not. It is gone ; only the pain still vibrates. Some tense, forgotten string within had been touched in passing.

Slowly the summer went by. The thread was broken at last. The thoughts which had sprung back continually to Dacre had learned to dwell upon other objects. He had never written. He had made no effort to overbear her decision or to excuse himself. From Mina Hauser she heard sometimes. Only once had she spoken of him ; and then to say that Christine, hearing nothing, was anxious and alarmed. Long before this, Katey had told Jack and Josie of her appearance upon the stage at the Junction, and of the Hauser family. Christine's love-story only she had withheld ;

partly because it had been imparted to her in that most binding of all confidences, which asks no promise — and partly because it was so interwoven with her own brief romance. Her romance! There would, doubtless, come no other to her life. She looked forward without interest. The future, to be sure, was not now as it had been at first — a great open sea, cold and gray, and crossed by no white-winged ships; the roads of her fancy led no longer to a high, blank wall. There were Jack and Josie, Delphine and her family, — they bounded her world; and there was her work; for work she must, or life would be unbearable. The summer was almost over, and she was going back to La Fayette. Professor Dyce had written a brief note to say that there had been many changes in the school, but her place awaited her if she chose to return. And she was going back. The dull routine was tedious, but it was work, and ready to her hand. It would engross her mind; and she would do it conscientiously for want of a better, nobler mission. She had no ambition; she felt no call, such as comes to some women, to do great deeds. But the commonest duties, well done, confer nobility upon the doer, and it was work; she came back to that always. She should go on year after year, growing old, and worn, and white-haired, perhaps, at last, in that little corner room looking down upon the Gothic porch of a church. People would pass in and out there, — old and young, bridal parties and funeral cortéges; but it would hold one picture forever in her mind: the stillness of a summer night, the lowering clouds shutting out the stars, a handsome dark face bent close to hers, a shadowy figure moving slowly over the way. Ah!

she thought she had forgotten. She rose up quickly from sitting listlessly in her own room, and began hurriedly to dress. They were going to visit a collection of pictures, and even now Josie ran up the stairs and tapped at her door.

"What! not dressed! and I am late, too. O, Katey, you are an idle girl," she added, playfully; "you have done nothing all the morning, while I — do you know Jack thinks I am a wonderful housekeeper?"

"I don't doubt it." Katey was tying her bonnet strings under her chin, and searching for her gloves. "I agree with him heartily."

"How sweet you are in all that pink!" said Josie, when they were entering the picture gallery. "But you are so tall and grand that I am quite insignificant beside you;" and she made an abortive attempt to draw her diminutive figure to a fuller height. "You always will look like a princess in disguise. I believe if you were to walk down the street in a print gown, and with a handkerchief tied over your head, half the town would turn and stare after you."

"It would be strange if they did not," laughed Katey.

"Do laugh;" and Josie turned her eyes upon her with the wistful gaze Katey had marked many times before, but would not appear to notice; "you are very quiet and grave of late."

"Am I? I have been ill, you know, and that can never be amusing; and I have had many things to think of, some of which have troubled me not a little." She said it quietly, moved to no purpose when she began. Dacre's name had never been mentioned between them in all these months which they had spent

together. But now she would speak. They were almost alone. An old man with a mottled beard and a hooked nose — a dealer, perhaps — was moving from one picture to another, eying them with a cold, critical air. A younger man, shabbily dressed, — possibly an artist, — stood near by, sighting a landscape through his half-closed hand. They were early; there were no others in the room.

"I shall never see Dacre Home again." Katey's great grave eyes were fixed upon the canvas before them, with the far-seeing gaze of a sibyl. It was a little French study — an arbor, a stand, a wine-glass, a white shoulder, some black drapery, a screen of vines, a pair of dark eyes peeping through; but she saw nothing of it.

Josie caught her sleeve. "Do you really mean it? O, I am so glad! You cannot think how anxious I have been; and yet I would not try to force your confidence. And you are convinced at last that he is utterly worthless?"

"No," Katey said, stoutly. "There is much that is good in him."

"O, Katey! How can you think so? I dare not trust you then. I am afraid you will go back to him."

"Because I will not turn against him? You need not be afraid," she added; "I can never go back to him."

"But you are not going to pine away?"

One never knew what Katey might take upon herself to do.

"Do I look like it?" and she turned upon Josie the face that had lost something of its bloom and freshness, but was still round in its outline, and

sweeter than ever in its grave, thoughtful expression.

"No," responded Josie, doubtfully. "And you are sure you are not making yourself unhappy over it?"

"Quite sure," Katey replied. Then the room began to fill rapidly, an acquaintance accosted them, and they said no more.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE PICNIC.

THE changes to which Professor Dyce referred in his note to Katey were greater than she imagined. President Humphrey had been called to an institution in the far West, leaving Professor Dyce in charge at La Fayette until the trustees should decide upon some one to take his place. Miss Severance had been summoned to her home, and finally resigned her position in the school on account of domestic troubles; and at least half of the pupils had left, many from the South, with the forethought — or foreknowledge — of prophecy, having never returned after the Christmas holidays. Others failed to appear at the beginning of the spring term, when the fall of Sumter warned the nation of the dreadful future. A summer of excitement and confusion, never to be forgotten, followed, and it was only a handful, compared with the former number of girls, who gathered at the opening of the fall term. There were murmurs of dissatisfaction among these in regard to the political principles of the head of the school; for Professor Dyce was openly and avowedly for the government. Katey soon saw that this dissatisfaction was fostered and encouraged by Miss Wormley, who for some unknown cause had evidently conceived a dislike for the man whom she

had formerly fawned upon and flattered. A line, imaginary, and yet not the less strongly marked, was forming a division among the teachers. Upon one side were Professor Dyce, Miss Hersey, and Katey ; upon the other, Professor Payne, Professor Grôte, and Miss Wormley, while the instructor in modern languages was not regarded by either party, and little Mr. Milde kept his own counsel and smiled equally upon both.

For the evening study-hour the girls gathered now in the music-room. It was less dreary than the great, half-empty school-hall. Many and bitter were the discussions waged here in the half hour of twilight recreation after tea. Be-jewelled, be-furbelowed though the girls were, they had found a depth at last beneath these things. The whole air of the house was changed ; it had no longer the appearance of a quiet, well-regulated school ; but of some chance abiding-place, where people, jealous, distrustful of each other, waited during a little time with feverish impatience for what, no one knew. Among these warring elements Professor Dyce moved silently, outwardly calm, self-possessed, and assured. It was a relief to Katey to feel that his eyes were no longer upon her ; that the foolish suspicions which she had awakened at first had died out, or been forgotten in other and more important affairs. She took up her diminished classes with fresh zeal. The stirring events of each day in the outside world, with the duties close by her hands, banished all morbid regrets, and brought her mind to a healthier tone. She wondered still about Dacre, but without pain. The little formula of prayer to which her lips had become accustomed so long ago, she still kept up. It could do her no harm, nor him. And something like faith

enlarged her vision at times, and made her feel that it would not be in vain. Still she heard nothing of him. Even Mina Hauser, for some reason, had ceased to write.

There was less of discipline now in the school than there had been once. With the exception of Professor Dyce, who held them all with a strong, firm hand, the teachers relaxed something of their former vigilance. The recitations were naturally shortened since the classes were so small, and the hours of recreation increased. In place of the processional walk about town, which had once comprised the daily exercise, Professor Dyce led the girls often, in these pleasant September days, quite beyond the limits of the city.

One day, a month, perhaps, after the beginning of the term, he announced at morning prayers that the school would spend the afternoon in the country. He would leave Miss Wormley, through whose knowledge of the suburbs he had perfected the plan, to give its details; and with this he left the desk and the school-room, followed by some such daring expressions of delight as a soft clapping of hands from the younger girls. Miss Wormley explained that immediately after dinner omnibuses would be in attendance at the door, to convey the young ladies to a point some four or five miles from town, within easy walking distance of the woods, where they would take an early tea, and return to the city before dark.

Professor Payne excused himself from the party, and Miss Hersey decided that it would be necessary for her also to remain at home. Miss Wormley, busily collecting the lunch baskets which the housekeeper had prepared, smiled a peculiar and not altogether

pleasant smile when this announcement was made to her.

"The care of the young ladies will devolve upon you and me, then," she said to Katey, in an unusually gracious tone.

"Yes; and upon Professor Dyce. He is going, of course?"

"Professor Dyce? O, of course." And again the watery blue eyes half closed in an odd smile.

They set off at last, a gay party, filling a couple of omnibuses, merry, happy, and forgetful for the time of their differences. The road was smooth and hard, when the paved streets of the town were once left behind; the country fresh and greener than in mid-summer; the air mild, yet not too warm; the day perfect. What more could they desire?

Upon the outskirts of a suburban village they descended from the omnibuses, and went on, a straggling company, led by Miss Wormley, up the pleasant country road to the picnic ground, a half mile away.

"Is it much farther?" Katey ventured to ask at last. The afternoon sun was fiercely hot; no shadow from welcome wayside trees fell upon the dusty road. The shawl and basket upon her arm were growing heavier each moment.

"No; we turn in at that gate. There is the grove," Miss Wormley replied.

A bend in the road had long since hidden their starting-point. They had left every trace of human habitation behind. Rough, hillocky fields, broken into knolls, and even mountains in the distance, met their eyes on every hand. Across these, in irregular devious wanderings, straggled a narrow belt of woods,

disappearing only where the horizon shut down upon it at last.

The professor stepped forward and opened the gate as Miss Wormley paused before it. He waited until the last had passed through. Katey had lagged behind. He took the basket from her hand, and walked on beside her without speaking. The grass was cool and soft to the feet; a faint breeze rose and came to meet them as they reached the edge of the woods, stirring the branches of the trees; a startled bird fluttered away, uttering a shrill, piping call to its mate. It was a pleasant summer scene, suggestive of peace.

"One might almost forget the war," Katey said, letting her eyes wander after her thoughts to the distant, hazy hills.

"Is it, then, so easily forgotten? O, not for me," the professor replied, in a deep, suppressed voice, a fire burning in his eyes.

"The drum, the drum, it calls so loud,"

he said, half to himself.

And would he go? Jack had written the week before that he expected his commission daily. O, how near this was coming to each one! How real this terrible dream might yet be! She, too, had enlisted heart and soul. That was all a woman could do. Her busy hands, to do their possible, meek office, followed, as a matter of course, needing no fresh consecration. But often her desires soared beyond this. "*Dear Jack,*" she had written, feeling only this uplifting of the soul beyond all dreadful forebodings. Then she laid her face upon the paper; no other words came with the rush of strong emotion. When she was

calmer she took up the pen again. "It must be sweet to die for one's country," she added, with that holy enthusiasm which only women and martyrs know.

They walked on silently for a moment; then Katey spoke again softly.

"But the school! How could you leave the school?"

"It has never been any but a temporary affair with me," he replied. "I should give it up at once if there were only some one to take my place. I have to wait a little longer for my degree,—that is all. Nothing else need keep me here. But, indeed, six months hence there will be no school. You think me a prophet of evil?" For Katey turned her face upon him full of surprise and doubt.

"The result is inevitable, and not far in the future, either. Ah! carefully;" as one of the little girls, running back to meet them, stumbled, and would have fallen, had he not caught her.

"Please, Miss Wormley wants to know if we are to make a fire?"

"Certainly;" and he hastened on with the child to where the others had gathered under the trees, close by a noisy little brook clattering down over the stones. The girls were tired and heated, and somewhat inclined to be cross after the dusty walk, upon which they had not calculated; but his presence soon put them in good humor. Notwithstanding the grave air he always wore, and the authority which he could exercise upon occasions, a certain gentle deference, a courtly manner, which years of society, perhaps, had imparted to him, and which was never forgotten in his intercourse with the smallest and most insignificant of

the sex, flattered and won upon the girls imperceptibly. They might rail at him in secret for his political principles, but each one was ready to do his bidding, and proud if a word of commendation fell from his lips. There was a flutter of ribbons about him now, when Miss Wormley announced that it was time to think about tea, each one hoping to be drawn into his service. The younger children ran to gather wood to feed the fire he had lit in a dry hollow, the older ones prepared to spread the cloth and set out the contents of the baskets, while Katey and Clary Luckiwinner set about making the coffee under his direction.

They chattered and laughed over their rural repast as only school-girls can and will. They told stories, and even sang songs, at its conclusion, grouped about in picturesque attitudes, not entirely unstudied, upon the moss-grown rocks and stumps of fallen trees. Then, when the cloth had been cleared, and while the baskets were repacked and gathered together again, they wandered away as they chose. "Not too far," cautioned the professor, "we must be moving towards town in an hour; it would not be wise to let the twilight find us scattered among these woods and hills."

Miss Wormley and Katey had been collecting the baskets; even Clary had been tempted away by the others. Closing the last one with an exclamation of satisfaction, Miss Wormley strolled off after the girls. Katey was tired; she had served them all without sparing her strength. She had dismissed the last who volunteered to assist in clearing away the remains of the tea, and sent her off towards the fields where her eyes had followed the others wistfully, assuming the task herself. She sat down now to rest. The pro-

fessor, at a little distance, had thrown himself upon the ground, his back against the trunk of a tree, and lit a cigar, too busy with the reverie called up by the silence, or the smoke slowly curling about his head, to notice her. She had no fear now of what he might say, even though his glance should discover her. In what a childish terror she had avoided him all the past year! And how all these imaginary fears had fled in the presence of the real! Then her thoughts flew, as they did so often now, to Jack. Ah! what should we do but for the blessed care for others which takes us out of our own narrow selves? Dear Jack! He was, perhaps, already on his way to Washington, where Josie would follow him. Jack in the blue, with a sword at his side! Jack's handsome eyes looking out from under a visor! But Jack was always a hero to her, and he would live to come home again. There is a conviction stronger than hope, different even from faith, a kind of foreknowledge, and this Katey possessed now. She might have her terrors when others quaked. She might see her dark days when the clouds hung low, — but he would come home.

She said it to herself with a smile on her lips, though something wet fell upon the hands lying in her lap. Then she looked up hastily, and met Professor Dyce's eyes. He must have been regarding her for a long time; certainly there was no surprise in his face at seeing her there.

"You are quite well?" he said, inquiringly. There was something like anxiety in his tone.

"O, yes."

"And happy?" It was an odd question, uttered so quietly, without the suggestion of a smile.

"O, yes," Katey said again.

That was all. He rose, throwing away his cigar. Did he take care of her? Did he watch over her? A little quick throb stirred her heart. There had been a moment of desolation, thinking of Jack, and of Delphine so far away. What if anything should happen here at the school? There was no one to whom she could turn. She had not thought of Professor Dyce.

The faintest shadow of coming night had already fallen. Miss Wormley approached now in evident haste. Professor Dyce watched her drawing near.

"We rest upon a volcano in La Fayette," he went on to Katey. "It is only a question of time. The end must come. For myself, I have succeeded in the undertaking which brought me here. I have transferred my interests elsewhere. Six weeks—a month—I could leave to-day without loss, though I should like my degree; but you—it is different with a woman. If your position becomes dangerous,—if I, who can see so much better than you to what all this may lead, having means of knowing what you can but be ignorant of,—if I tell you some day that the time has come for you to leave, will you trust me, and go?"

Katey gave one look into his eyes.

"Yes," she said, unhesitatingly, "I will."

Then, even as she uttered the last words, Miss Wormley joined them.

"It is time we started for home;" and the professor consulted his watch.

"There is no haste; it is early yet," said Miss Wormley. It struck Katey as odd. The night was close at hand. Or was it her manner which was strange? There was a kind of suppressed excitement

about the woman. She panted as though she had been running. The professor, standing upon a rock above them, searched the woods on either side. The girls were nowhere in sight.

"I have called them," Miss Wormley said, quickly. "They will be here directly. Of course you have seen the view from the Knoll?" she added to Katey, motioning with her head in the opposite direction from that by which they had entered the woods.

"No," Katey replied; "I was tired, and have been resting; and, indeed, I know nothing about it."

"Is it possible? Why, that is the aim and object of every picnic party here. It would be a shame not to see it. Professor Dyce!" He turned at her voice. "I will wait here for the girls, who are on their way back now from the Knoll, if you will take Miss Earle there for a moment. It is a pity that she should miss the view, which she says she has not seen."

"Nor have I," replied the professor. "I must confess my ignorance as to the situation of this Knoll, even. I trust it is not far," he added, with unconscious ungalantry. "It is later than I thought."

"O, no; I can easily direct you there;" and she proceeded to point out the way, which seemed to Katey both complicated and long in its various turnings.

"It must be too far for us to think of going now," she said.

"Not at all. You will soon see," Miss Wormley replied. "And you will be well paid for the slight exertion. But don't linger there," she called after them, "or we shall go home without you."

CHAPTER XXIII.

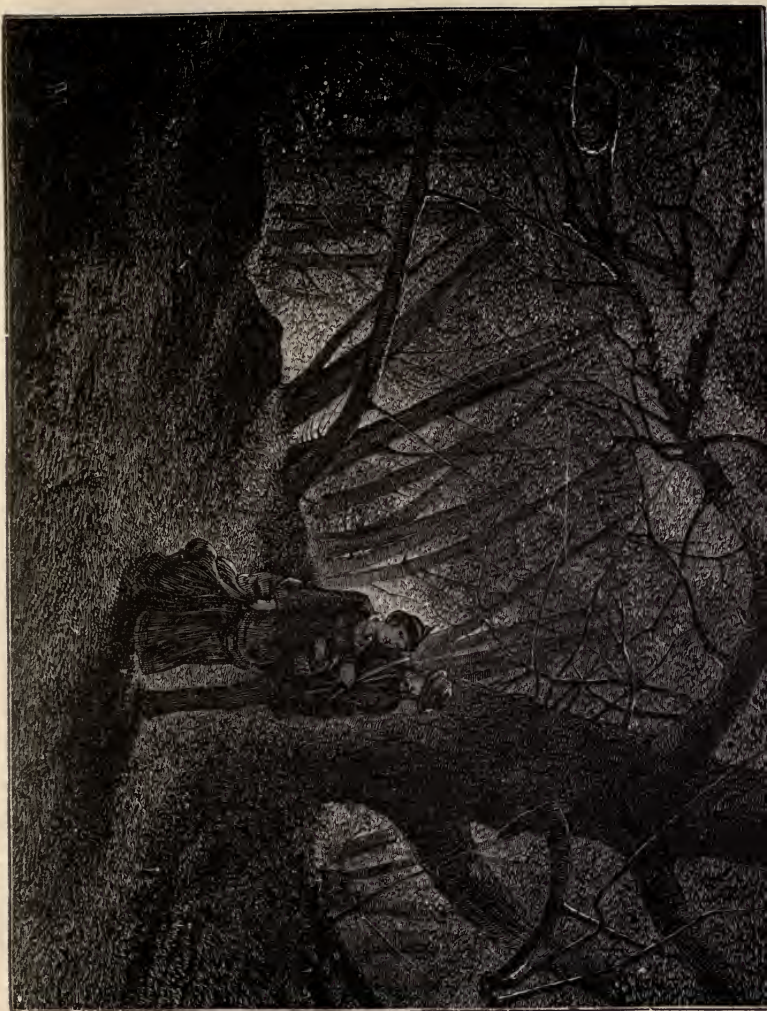
KATEY'S CONFESSION.

KATEY followed the professor, who led the way with some haste, and without replying to this playful remark. As they came out into the open fields the daylight flared into unexpected brightness. It was the shadows among the trees, perhaps, which had brought the twilight so soon.

"Where are the girls?" and Katey looked about her in surprise, for no one was in sight.

"They have probably crossed to the other side," the professor replied. "Miss Wormley has called them together. If you are anxious, we will turn back. Still, I think this must be the Knoll she spoke of. Are you equal to a run to the top of it? Give me your hand."

"This cannot be the spot," he said, when they had gained the summit only to find another hill, rising at a little distance to a greater height, shutting out the view from before them. Katey was already half way down upon the other side. She was filled with misgivings. "Let us go as fast as we can," she said. But the way lengthened before them; the deceitful knoll—if this were really the one they sought—seemed to move back coquettishly at their approach. Already the horizon had disappeared, and heavy shadows were creeping towards them.



"Professor Dyce, where are we going?" Katey exclaimed, at last.

"I don't know."

"Nor I."

Then they laughed.

"We had better return as quickly as possible," said the professor, beginning to retrace his steps. "It will be dark before we reach La Fayette. I am sorry to disappoint you —"

"It is no disappointment," Katey hastened to say. "I did not care to come, but Miss Wormley insisted upon it."

The way seemed much longer than when they first passed over it, and the shadows gained upon them with alarming speed.

"Are you quite sure?" Katey ventured, presently. "I think we should bend more to the left. I don't remember this clump of firs; do you?"

"We might not have noticed it. But I believe we should enter the woods at that turn."

Katey's heart fell in sudden fright; but she followed without speaking. She was by no means sure; perhaps he was right. They gained the woods. The day bade them adieu as they plunged into the shadows, and pushed on in silence. They reached the brook, which sang noisily on its way. The surroundings were strange. Their companions were nowhere in sight.

"Hark!" But it was only the cry of a distant hawk.

"We are too far down," said the professor, in the kind, hopeful tone people use with children to allay their fears. It alarmed Katey. "If we follow the

brook, we shall soon reach them." And again he led the way. It was an ill-trained, wilful little stream, that had heeded the beckoning of its own fancy ; it led them a devious way. Often they jumped its narrow width, when their progress was stopped by a fallen tree, or a great boulder which the spring freshets had brought down. The darkness was falling fast now. At a little distance it was difficult to distinguish the trees, or guard against the snares and pitfalls in which Katey's tired feet were continually caught. They spoke no word. They only went on and on, until, all at once, Katey, faint, and dizzy, and bewildered, would have fallen, had not the professor's strong hand held her up. He seated her upon the trunk of a prostrate tree.

"It is useless to go farther," he said, quietly. He stepped upon the log beside her, and, raising his fingers to his lips, gave a sharp, shrill whistle. He waited a moment. Katey held her breath to listen ; but there was no response. Again and again he repeated it. He changed it to a shout. A flock of crows rose overhead, with a great flapping of wings, and hoarse, oft-repeated caws, dying away at last in the distance. His voice had awakened no other sound. He sat down beside her.

"We need not hasten now," for Katey had made a movement to rise. "We should be quite as likely to take the wrong direction as the right. We either entered the woods above the point where we lunched, and so have been going farther away from it all the time, or have passed the place and not recognized it."

"But Miss Wormley and the girls ? They must be searching for us now."

"Give yourself no anxiety about them," said the professor. "They were safely housed an hour ago, I doubt not. Finding we did not return, Miss Wormley would take the girls home, and perhaps send some one after us. We will hope so, at least, and act accordingly. At the worst, we have only to wait for daylight, when we may find ourselves close by the turnpike. But I think we might make one other attempt. We will try the open fields. If we can only find the road, even if followed in the wrong direction, it must lead to some village or town, from which we can easily reach La Fayette."

They gained the open ground. Above them shone the stars, too bright by far; a soft, trembling darkness filled all the space below, in which they moved as in a fog-swept sea.

"This is folly and madness," said the professor. "We will go back, and build a fire. They will certainly send some one to look for us." And they retraced their steps to where the heavier shadows betokened the presence of the woods. He found a log where she could sit supported by the trunk of a tree.

"But you have no shawl, and the evening air is cool."

Thus reminded, she took up the shawl, which, with one of the lunch-baskets, she had carried, unconsciously, all the way, and wrapped it about her, while he gathered dry leaves and sticks, and lit a tiny fire, just beyond her feet.

"The wind is from the woods. We may safely make it burn as brightly as we can;" and he fed the flames, which, crackling and snapping, and rising higher and higher, surrounded them at last with a

circle of light, making the outer darkness still more dense by contrast.

"I must make a wider search for fuel," he said, presently. "You will not be afraid if I leave you for a while. We may have to remain here some hours, and a rousing fire would serve a double purpose."

Kate closed her eyes when he had gone. The delight of physical rest for the moment overpowered all other sensations. She did not sleep, but her thoughts became dreamy and confused. A sudden vision aroused her. Miss Wormley's face, full of malignant satisfaction, seemed to peer out of the darkness; but it vanished as she opened her eyes. She was still alone. The flames, unfed, had died down. She was cold, and conscious now of hunger. How fortunate that they had brought away one of the baskets! If it would only prove to contain something more desirable than spoons and forks! But where was Professor Dyce? She listened anxiously for his step. Could he have strayed beyond sight of the fire, since it had burned so low, and lost his way again? A great terror seized her—of the darkness, which seemed full of staring eyes—of the silence, which held mysterious whispers. She could not stay here. She threw an armful of brush upon the flames, and turned to the woods where he had disappeared, treading noiselessly, as though her light step might awaken some new, fresh fear. Suddenly she perceived him, not many yards away, sleeping, as she thought at first, stretched out beneath the trees, his elbow upon the ground, his hand supporting his head. His forehead was contracted, his heavy brows knit. No dreamer ever wore so anxious, so stern a countenance. Look-

ing closer, but fairly holding her breath, lest he should perceive her, she saw that his eyes, although open, were bent upon the ground ; and as she moved back, cautiously, he dropped his head upon his arm with a deep sigh.

Was he, then, so troubled, while he had concealed his anxiety from her? Sometimes care is infectious, and sometimes it is like the plank on which the children see-saw—the depression of one elevates the other. Katey's spirits rose. They could not be really lost, she thought, hopefully, retracing her steps. At the worst, as he had said, they could wait here until daylight released them. He need not be uneasy if it was on her account. And yet she would not call him. But she made the dry twigs snap in her hands, as she fed the fire, noisily. She still knelt before the blaze, opening the lunch-basket, when he rejoined her.

"So you are awake. I came back once, and found you sleeping," he said, with a smile.

But no smile could deceive her now.

"What is that? And you have carried it all the way!"

"I was not aware of it, I can assure you. How fortunate!" she exclaimed, bringing out one treasure after another. "Not only sandwiches and rolls, and more sandwiches, but such superfluous products of civilization as knives and forks! And what can this be?" She brought out a tin cup, which held a paper, half broken open. "Coffee!" Her manner had entirely changed. He wondered, looking down upon her, as, clasping basket and viands and all in her arms, she said, with a playful air of distress:—

"Professor Dyce, I am shockingly hungry. It can't

be long before they come," she went on, in a bright tone, setting out the sandwiches upon the end of the log nearest the fire; "and, in the mean time, we will take supper. Will you bring some water from the brook, for the coffee?"

He disappeared among the trees to return in a moment with the cup filled. They placed it upon the glowing coals.

"You don't care for cream, I suppose?" said Katey, when it had boiled furiously, and been set aside at last.

"O, no; not at all."

"And much sugar is not good for one. It might be wise to dispense with it altogether."

"True; especially as we have none."

"And coffee is never so delicious as when drank from the cup in which it is made," and Katey prepared to test her theory. The heated rim approached her lips. "And never so hot, I am sure," she concluded, with tears in her eyes.

The professor laughed.

"You should wait until it has had time to cool; and it has not yet settled. I have camped out more than once. Coffee from a tin cup is no novelty to me."

And he recounted some boyish experience, with an animation which Katey felt to be forced. He watched and listened constantly, she knew. What did he dread? What did he expect? Why was he so absent and preoccupied? As for herself, she was contented and at rest now. They had food and fire, and presently some one would come.

"Are there any bears or wolves about here?"

"O, no;" and he smiled, as though amused by what she felt to be a childish question. Her face grew warm in the fire-light, but still she went on.

"Is there anything one need fear?"

His head had been turned, as though listening. He looked around at her now.

"No. Are you afraid?"

"I am not afraid; but—" Then she stopped, red-denying to her hair.

He uttered a short, crisp laugh.

"You thought I might be, perhaps."

Katey turned her head away.

"Will you not tell me why you are anxious?" she said.

His face became grave at once.

"Not for any harm which can come to us here, I can assure you. There is no reason why you should not sleep as peacefully as in your own bed. And, indeed, it is time you were asleep. Do you know how late it is?"

"No."

He took out his watch, glanced at it, and held its face to her.

"One o'clock!" Then she remembered something else. "They should have been here before now," she said.

He made no reply. His face was averted, and he was suddenly busy over the fire.

"I think I can make you more comfortable;" and he disappeared among the trees, returning in a moment with his arms full of dried leaves, which he threw down before her. Two or three similar journeys and his work was done.

"And now, if you will make a couch of it, and put your feet to the fire, you may sleep for an hour or two. This moss-covered log may serve, for once, as a pil-

low. Wrap your shawl well about you, and don't be anxious; nothing can harm you. I shall not go far away."

Then, as Katey prepared to follow his advice, he threw another armful of brush upon the blaze before vanishing into the darkness. She wrapped herself warmly, as he had told her to do. Sleep would not come, however, at her bidding; but the change of position was restful, and with her cheek against the shawl, she followed out the queries which his manner had raised in her mind. Why did he bid her sleep, and say nothing more of the party who would come to seek them? Had he given up all hope of it? She could not but feel that they should have been here before now. The blazing fire must be visible for miles. It would have guided any one to them at once. Or in the utter stillness of the night, a voice would have reached them from a distance. But who was there at the school to start upon such a quest? Professor Payne, if he knew the circumstances. He was too rigidly just and conscientious to do otherwise. He would not let his bitterest enemy come to harm if he could save him. And in Professor Dyce's absence he was at the head of the house. But what would Miss Wormley say to him? What account of their disappearance would she give? And then, in a moment, the conviction flashed upon Katey's mind that Miss Wormley had wilfully misled them, and had deserted them at last. No one would come; it was useless to longer expect it. She sat upright with the thought. A step drew near, and Professor Dyce appeared.

"Well?" and Katey's voice was strained and anxious.

"I thought you were asleep, child."

"I cannot sleep. I believe I am nervous," she added, with a little hysterical laugh. "Have you heard anything? Have you seen anything?"

"Nothing at all!" He had thrown himself down before the fire. He did not avoid her eyes now. "We must rely upon ourselves," he said. "No one will come in search of us. They should have been here hours ago. Don't be frightened!" for Katey had buried her face in the folds of her shawl. "We shall have no difficulty in finding our way as soon as it is daylight."

"You believe it?" and Katey's eyes searched his face.

"Without a shadow of doubt."

"Then there is nothing to be anxious about;" and her voice was cheerful and assured.

"You are warm?" and he fed the fire again.

"O, yes; entirely comfortable, thank you."

"Then try to sleep. We may have a long tramp before us yet."

"I cannot; I feel like a gypsy;" and with the little red shawl twisted fantastically about her, she looked not unlike one as she drew nearer to the blaze. "I begin to enjoy it, since there is really nothing to fear."

He made no reply. She bent forward, her hands clasped around her knees, her face warm and bright in the fire-light.

"Professor Dyce," she said, presently, in a low, almost timid, voice. He raised his head from his arm, where he lay regarding her.

"Well?" — when she did not go on.

"I want to tell you something; only don't look at me, please."

"Shall I cover my face, or turn away?"

"Neither; only look at the fire; that will do; though I believe I am not afraid of you now."

"Which implies that you have been?" and he raised his eyes quickly, then dropped them again.

"I suppose so, since I am conscious that I am not now; but that is metaphysics."

"In which gypsies are not supposed to indulge."

There was a flutter of the leaves overhead, moved by a passing wind. Far away in the distance the call of some night-bird awoke the stillness, as she paused again.

"It is nothing," she went on, slowly. "Only I should like to tell you about that night when we were detained at the Junction. I saw you in the concert hall. I—I was with the singers, you know."

"Yes, I know;" and an odd smile crossed his face.

"You must have thought it strange," she said, timidly. Her forehead flamed at the recollection of the little red petticoat.

"I believe I did; very strange."

"But it was nothing at all." And then, very quickly, she recounted the story of her acquaintance with the Hauser family.

"Why did you not tell me at once?" he said, at its conclusion. "A word would have explained what could not but appear strange to me."

"I was angry; I saw that you distrusted me."

"Why should I not?" He had risen while she was speaking, and paced back and forth now with short, impatient steps. "I was very rude to you afterwards," he said, presently. Then he took off his hat. "I beg your pardon."

"O, that is all long past," Katey replied, in confusion. "I deserved it; but I was too proud to speak."

"And suffered for your silence. Or, perhaps, you did not suffer;" and he eyed her sharply.

"Yes; it hurt me to be doubted so," she answered, slowly. "But —" She regarded the fire thoughtfully, without finishing the sentence.

"I want to thank you," she said, at last, raising her eyes, and breaking the pause which he had not interrupted, "for *everything*. I can't talk about it," she added, hurriedly, while a little shadow stole over her face, "but I want to assure you that I have appreciated your kindness all the time. I think I could sleep now," she went on, in a different tone, before he could reply. "But what will you do? You have not closed your eyes to-night."

"I shall watch the fire. I could not sleep if I tried."

"You will not go away?"

"O, no, no."

"You will stay here, and make yourself comfortable by the fire, I mean."

"Certainly; if you wish it."

"I do, indeed. And then, perhaps, you will sleep in spite of your resolution. There is nothing to fear, you said?"

"Nothing about us here, I assure you;" and, wrapped in her shawl, her head resting upon her moss-covered pillow, Katey soon forgot her troubles.

CHAPTER XXIV.

DO WE KEEP OUR LOVE TO PAY OUR DEBTS WITH?

SHE awoke with the morning sun shining full upon her, conscious of a delicious warmth and restfulness. How heavy her shawl had become! Then she rose hurriedly.

"Professor Dyce, you have forgotten your coat."

He took it from her hand, and proceeded to put it on gravely.

"You do not mean — you surely have not —" she began, her eyes still upon the coat.

"I have not suffered in the least, I can assure you. And now will you have a cup of coffee?"

"Let me run down to the brook and bathe my face, first," Katey replied, humbly, forbearing to thank him. It was all beyond words, but she should never forget.

She came back in a moment, her cheeks and fingertips glowing from contact with the stream, which had served also as a mirror before which to re-arrange the dark braids of heavy hair, and tie again the knot of flame-colored ribbon at her throat. She was looping up the skirt of her pretty gray gown over the bright petticoat beneath it as she approached the fire, trying with deft fingers to hide the numerous rents, the result of the forced march in the dark the night before.

"A blessing on the man who invented pins," she said, putting the last in place, and taking up the lunch-basket; "and now, where are we, please?"

In spite of the light tone, her eyes, sweeping the unfamiliar landscape, where was no trace of road or cultivated field or homestead, were full of anxiety.

"Just where, or how near to La Fayette, it is impossible to tell," replied the professor. "But there is a well-travelled road not far from here; probably the turnpike upon which we came from town yesterday: we have only to follow that."

"But first, breakfast;" and Katey took out the remains of the last night's supper. "How fortunate that I brought this basket away! But now I think of it, Miss Wormley gave it to me."

"She had no intention of starving us, then; that is something," said the professor, in a low tone. But Katey had caught the words, and knew that his suspicions were the same as her own.

The scanty breakfast was soon over. Professor Dyce scattered the brands of the fire as they prepared to leave their camping-place.

"It was to have served a double purpose," he said, grimly; "one would have sufficed. No, we will leave the basket," when Katey took it up from force of habit.

"There is still a little coffee."

"We will take it and the cup, though we shall reach some village, or La Fayette itself, before noon, without doubt. Are you equal to a long tramp?"

"I think so;" and certainly her appearance was as fresh as when they started from town the day before. The bivouac under the stars had only brightened her eyes and reddened her cheeks.

They set off over the rough fields glistening with dew in the early morning sun, where they had wandered vainly in the darkness for a little while the night before. They climbed more than one low wall, the professor leading the way in so straight a line that Katey knew he had explored it while she slept. The road was gained at last, and he spoke for the first time.

"It cannot be far, whichever direction we take, to some village or farm-house. We need not hasten so."

And Katey, breathless from the speed with which they had begun their journey, was glad to slacken her pace. It was much easier, too, to follow this well-beaten road than it had been to make their way over the rough fields, full of snares to unwary feet. The sun, though rising higher and higher, shone upon them still with only agreeable warmth; the air was fresh and exhilarating as they went on mile after mile, strong in the conviction that the next turn of the road must bring some human habitation into view.

But morning merged into noon; the sun had long since swept off the dew, and threw down now a thousand burning arrows upon the white stretch of road, and still no village, no single farm-house even, had greeted their eyes. The belt of woods spread out until it skirted the road upon one side; upon the other the rough, neglected land stretched away to the horizon. Somewhere among the valleys hidden in the distance, villages might nestle, but they were not visible from this point, as again they hastened towards a bend in the road, only to find themselves upon the brow of a low hill with the same unchanging landscape before them.

Katey sat down upon a low, flat rock by the side of the way. She was faint and dizzy. They had eaten their scanty breakfast almost at daybreak, and had been hours on the road. She rested her arms upon the rock, and dropped her head as everything whirled around her.

"Don't be discouraged," said the professor with the patient cheerfulness which went to her heart. "We will rest at the foot of the hill under a clump of trees I see there, build a fire, and as a brook has straggled out of the woods most opportunely, you shall be served with coffee as you sit in the door of your tent. Come!" and thus encouraged, Katey made one more effort.

She laid herself down under the trees when they were gained, her shawl rolled into a pillow, while the professor gathered a little heap of sticks and dried leaves, and essayed to light a fire. He uttered a quickly-repressed exclamation. She opened her eyes. The match in his hand had gone out.

"But you have more?"

"I am afraid not;" and he made a fruitless search.

She burst into tears. It was silly and childish, and she was ashamed of her weakness, but this was the last straw.

"Don't," he said, gently. "Pray, don't. We shall certainly come to a house soon; this cannot last much longer. If I could only do something!" he broke out, in sudden despair.

"I am sorry—I am ashamed," sobbed Katey. "You, too, must be tired, and faint, and discouraged."

"Not discouraged," he said, quickly. "It is annoying, only. There, that is a brave girl," as the sobs

became less violent. "Now, try to sleep a little while."

But Katey sat suddenly upright, instead.

"I had forgotten this," she said, dragging at her watch-chain. "Will not this light a fire?" and she held out a tiny globe of colorless rock-crystal.

"We can try it, at least," he said. And he set himself to gathering the driest grasses, the most inflammable material within his reach, adding scraps from an old letter, and placing them all upon a stone already heated by the sun. After repeated attempts, the little bauble, thus turned unexpectedly to use, was coaxed to act the part of a burning-glass; a faint breath of smoke hovered over the pile, darkening, bursting into a feeble flame. They had succeeded!

Ah! no nectar of the gods ever equalled the draughts from the tin cup, a little later; no rest was ever to Katey like the short hour in which she lay curled up in the shadow of the long, thick branches of the laurels, the rough, open fields about her.

They went on with new strength and courage, less impatient than before. But what we desire and seek after in hot haste, comes presently when we least expect it; we turn aside for a little time weary of the search, and lo! we stumble upon it. A break in the woods, and suddenly, almost in their faces, rose a little old farm-house, peaceful, quiet, homely, and not in the least disturbed by the encounter, which is more than can be said of one of its inmates,—a frowzy Scotch terrier, who rushed out to meet them, uttering shrill yelping cries which brought the mistress of the house to the door.

"Our troubles are over," said Katey.

It was the professor who lagged now. "They have but just begun," he replied, in a low tone, which did not reach her ear. "Wait here a moment," he said aloud, and went on to the door alone.

"My good woman," he began, raising his hat to the tall, raw-boned specimen of womanhood, who had yet a kindly face, "could you give us some dinner, and by any means send us on to the next town?"

Surprise and curiosity at sight of the two who had apparently dropped from the skies, since there were no signs of ordinary human conveyance, changed to suspicion in the woman's countenance.

"I don' no," she replied, slowly.

"You shall be well paid for the trouble."

"Tain't the money." At this moment Katey approached. She gave her a sharp, keen glance. "Well, you can come in, I reckon; an' I'll find ye something to eat," she said, at last, leading the way into a low kitchen, bare enough, but neat in its appointments, where a couple of tow-headed children playing upon the floor immediately hid themselves under the table.

"Perhaps you could give this lady a room where she could rest while I see what can be done about going on," suggested the professor; and Katey presently found herself shut into a tiny bedroom opening from the kitchen, with an outlook through its one window upon the green grass-plot before the front door. Here she strove to remove the traces of travel, making her toilet before a little glass hanging above the high chest of drawers, which distorted her features oddly.

When, after a time, she returned to the kitchen, the woman had taken herself and her family out of the

way, a lunch was spread upon the table, and the professor stood with his back to her, before the window, alone. He turned as she closed the door after her. There was an expression of annoyance upon his face, which cleared at sight of Katey.

"I suppose we may sit down," he said, moving towards the table. His manner was constrained and absent. They ate in silence; Katey wondering, but not daring to ask, what information he had gained, or how they were to proceed to La Fayette.

"I am going to find the man of the house, and see what means he has of sending us on," the professor said, when they rose at last. There had come a strange consciousness into his face, almost like embarrassment. He paused with his hand upon the door. "You had better remain in your room until I send for you. I shall tell the woman you are lying down, so that she need not disturb you. One never knows what such people may say," he added, hastily; "don't talk with her." Then he went out, and shut the door.

"What they may say?" thought Katey. What *could* they say? She was too tired to think about it. She went back to the little close room, and threw herself upon the bed to rest during the brief time of waiting, and fell at once into a heavy sleep. Some one stood over her presently. It was the woman of the house, who touched her arm.

"Your husband would like to have you come out, ma'am, as soon as you are ready." Then she left her to herself again.

Katey sprang up, her face tingling, her fingers awkward over the tying of her hat. One never, indeed,

knew what these people might say ! She stood a moment, her hand upon the door latch. What if the professor had heard the summons ! She was shy at the thought of meeting him. Then, putting away her silly fears, and making herself brave for the moment, she went out. The woman was alone in the kitchen, clearing away the remains of their lunch.

"He's in the parlor," she said without looking up, going on with her work, but motioning with her head towards the door. Long afterwards that little room rested in Katey's memory — with its dull, home-spun carpet, its homely furniture set at ungainly angles, the queer silhouettes over the high mantle, the tiny window-panes, against which the branches of an apple tree outside, stunted and gnarled, tapped unceasingly. The flush had not died out of her face, and there was a little tremor in her hands, as she pushed open the door. The professor rose from the sofa where he had been lying.

"What is it?" he said, quickly, closing the door after her. "What has she said to you?"

"Nothing; — or nothing of any consequence," Katey replied, angry at herself as she felt the color mount to her hair.

"I wish you would tell me."

Then she told, stammering over the words: "She only said — that is, she thought — I was your wife."

"O!" He seemed greatly relieved by the brief sentence which had so embarrassed her. "It is my fault — if there is any," he went on, hesitating over the words, and yet speaking quite calmly. "I gave her to understand so."

"What do you mean? How dared you!" Katey

turned upon him in indignant astonishment. But there was neither shame nor quailing in the eyes which met hers.

"You are very angry, then?"

"It was not true," she said, faintly.

He led her to the sofa, and made her sit down. "Think a moment," he said. "How could I bring you to the door here, and say you were nothing to me?"

"O, wait," cried Katey, in distress. Then her hot face dropped into her hands.

"We are twenty miles from La Fayette. We must have shortened the distance in our wanderings across the country," he went on, without appearing to notice her. "I hardly think we can have walked so far as that. It is full twenty miles by the road, this man informs me, and there is no way of reaching there from here but by proceeding to A——, ten miles farther on, and taking the train back to La Fayette to-night."

He rose and began to pace the room. Katey had made no reply. She had expressed neither surprise nor assent. She sat trembling and silent in the corner of the old sofa.

"It will be better," he said, presently, drawing a chair and sitting down before her, "to understand the whole matter. Indeed, I must talk this over plainly with you. I had the misfortune, if it be one, to incur Miss Wormley's resentment a few weeks ago. She uttered some threats then, of which I thought nothing at the time. I am inclined to believe now that she has bided her time, and taken this opportunity to wreak her vengeance. I could laugh at it but for

you. You can think, perhaps, what she may do for us in La Fayette," he added. "She could not have chosen a better time, and every hour of absence has weakened our position there."

"Let us go back at once, then;" and Katey made a hurried movement to put on her shawl.

"We cannot start now. A stage will pass here in an hour, or more, on its way to A——. We must take that."

Again he rose and paced the floor. Then he paused. "You promised yesterday that when I bade you leave La Fayette you would go."

"Yes."

"What if I say now, Don't return there? Indeed," he added, quickly, "there is but one way in which I dare let you go back. Child! what might they not say to you—do to you! Go home to your sister."

"And let the teachers and the girls believe I was ashamed to return? And have strange stories come creeping after me? O, never! How can you ask it? Besides, I cannot, if I would. Mrs. Estemere is abroad. The house is closed."

"But you have a brother."

"Yes, Jack;" and Katey's eyes shone as she spoke his name. "He is on his way to the Army of the Potomac before this time. His wife will follow him to Washington—perhaps she has already. You see I have no other home just now. I must return to La Fayette."

"But you have friends—the Durants."

"And could I go to any of them like this? Professor Dyce, you mean to be kind, but you are cruel."

He went away to the window without a word. He stood staring out into the apple tree.

"Why don't you think of yourself?" she asked, presently, breaking the stillness of the room with the voice which held a little tremor yet. "What will you do? How can you go back? They distrust you now. You are a marked man in the town, I know. You acknowledge that you may have to leave at any time. They will say —"

"What will they say?" He turned his head, but not his eyes, as he waited for her to go on.

"They will say —"

"Well?"

"That you have run away with one of the teachers."

"But if I return?"

"That will make no difference. They will ask what has become of me."

He crossed the room and stood before her, grave and calm. "Miss Earle, will you be my wife?"

Katey shrank back without speaking.

A shadow touched his face.

"It is too soon, I see," he said.

And "You are too generous," she replied, at the same moment.

"I fear I am not generous at all," he said. "I have thought for a long time I should some day ask you that question. Years hence, perhaps, when I dared hope you would not say no."

"And you ask me now because I am homeless?"

He took up her words eagerly.

"Yes, because you are homeless, and in trouble; because you have nowhere to go, and there is no one now to care for you but me! I wish with all my heart

you were alone in the world, as you are alone here. I could almost desire you to be cast out and despised, so that I — ”

He stretched his arms towards her, but Katey, drawing back into her shadowy corner, gazed at him with frightened eyes. His arms fell, he turned abruptly to the window.

There was silence in the little, low room. Then by and by a hand touched the professor's arm. Katey's face was very pale and grave.

“ Would it be better for you — would it be easier for you to go back if you married me ? ”

“ I suppose so. But don't think of that. I shall do well enough ; ” and he made a little effort to shake off her hand.

“ Then, if you please,” she went on meekly, “ I will be your wife.”

“ And sacrifice yourself in your generosity ? Not to me.”

“ Then you will not take me ? ”

A great flood of color swept over his forehead. He leaned his head against the window-frame. “ Go away, please, or I shall say yes, and be ashamed of myself afterwards.”

“ And — and it wouldn't be a sacrifice. It frightened me at first, it was so strange ; and it seemed such a little time since. — ” Then she broke down.

He laid her head against his shoulder, and stroked her hair, as he might have done to almost any one in trouble. “ You cannot love me ? That is so — is it not ? ” and a sigh moved Katey's cheek where it lay.

“ I don't know,” she answered, hiding her face.

“ I think I will be persuaded to take you,” he said,

with a little low laugh. "The benefit of the doubt is mine." Then he was grave again. "At least, you are not afraid to put your future into my hands? You can trust me — can you not?" He raised her face so that he could look into her eyes.

"Entirely;" and she laid her two hands in his as the door opened.

CHAPTER XXV.

A BEGGAR-MAID.

IT was the mistress of the house who thrust her head in to say, —

“The stage is coming down the hill.”

“Very well; we are ready,” replied the professor. “Our preparations for departure are tolerably simple,” he added, taking up his hat and Katey’s shawl.

It was a heavy, old-fashioned coach which drew up before the door at sight of the waiting party, after an alarming swoop at the small house. The driver swung himself down from his place. There was but one passenger inside — an old lady of prim, genteel air, with soft curls of white hair upon each side of her delicate face, and a large black satin reticule in her lap. Katey was conscious of painful embarrassment as she took the seat beside her. The judgment of the world, the speech of people, had become all at once matters of most vital interest. She felt the old lady’s eyes fixed upon the rents in her gown, which would obtrude themselves in spite of her efforts at concealment. Who could this girl be? — aristocratic in appearance, picked up at a lonely farm-house with not so much as a hand-satchel for luggage, dressed in a pretty but shockingly torn gown, with a gentleman attendant of whom she seemed strangely shy — and wonder checked

the sentence upon the old lady's lips — a passing remark upon the weather.

Katey felt the glance without seeing it. She felt, too, the slight drawing away of the neat black skirts. "O, dear!" she thought, "it must be that I do not look respectable!" and involuntarily she glanced down upon the poor, despised gown, and the one glove, held fast from an instinct of propriety, the other having disappeared somewhere in her wanderings. Was Professor Dyce ashamed of her? She turned anxiously to the corner where he sat, only to meet the questioning glance of a pair of keen gray eyes, and a smile which set her fears at rest. She could bear it if he did not care, and she shook out her drapery as though it had been rustling silk, and settled herself anew before closing her eyes and resigning herself to sleep. She was conscious, occasionally, of the rolling, rattling motion as they flew down the rough hills, or climbed others slowly, swinging to and fro; of a pause once, and the sound of voices; then, at last, the jolting over pavements aroused her. They were descending again, but more deliberately; a wide river wound away below them; the street was crowded and noisy, and full of life; beyond the river another city spread itself as far as the eye could see. Katey rubbed her eyes, bewildered by the change. There was a heavy lurch, a smooth roll, a pause, the snort of steam, the sound of machinery.

"Where are we?" she asked aloud, and sat upright.

"We are crossing the ferry to A——," the professor replied.

"Where do you want to go?" asked the driver, thrusting his head in at the window.

"We will get out here ;" and the professor assisted Katey to alight. "Good by," she said, pleasantly, to the old lady in the corner. "O, I am not at all dreadful; only I have spoiled my gown," she wanted to add, as the twinkling eyes stared in perplexity a moment; then the white curls bobbed graciously.

They reached the other side, and, mingling with the crowd, pressed forward up the narrow, dirty streets, and out at last into an open space, edged by the water upon one side, and by a thronged street upon the other. Here, where the river bent and bore away, a bit of the shore had been reserved from commerce, squalor, and dirt. Broad, white stones were under one's feet; all about were trees and flowers jealously guarded, — poor, gayly-dressed prisoners behind iron bars, — and scattered here and there seats, where the tired and foot-sore might rest. Away beyond was the open bay, blue, and twinkling under the bright sky, ploughed into snowy furrows by the steamers, or white with gleaming sails.

"O, how beautiful!" cried Katey. The wind seized the little gray hat with its scarlet wing; it caught her frayed gray gown as she stood with her bare hands clasped, her face like a song. A party of handsomely dressed people turned to stare at the figure. One of the young men raised his eye-glass and scanned her with open, impertinent admiration. "I tell you, Guy, there's a study," he said to his companion.

Katey caught the words — met the stare.

"O, please, let us go on ;" and she hurried forward, glad to be hidden again in the crowded street. They were approaching the first of the many spires she had

marked from the boat. It was upon an old church, left here by an odd chance, it would seem, in the midst of the whirl of business, like some grim old apostle planting its feet firmly upon the pavement, though jostled, and edged, and pushed by men in their greed for gain. And the text swung out on its silvery chimes in summer's heat or winter's cold, when storms wrapped the belfry round, or the sunshine fell like a blessing upon the wild, restless heart of the city, was ever the same: "*Ye cannot serve God and Mammon! Ye cannot serve God and Mammon!*"

Upon one side was the church-yard. Ah! how heavy must be the slumber which all this tumult had no power to awaken! Upon the other, a little garden, full of flowers — gay verbenas, tall, gaudy dahlias, and close against the wall a tangle of sweet-peas. Some street children, straying in through the tall iron gate, moved about the narrow paths, staring awe-struck and wondering at the blossoms. Religion, of which these waifs knew nothing, may seem more beautiful some day — who knows? — for the fragrance of the flowers growing under the shadow of the church walls.

Katey paused to peer through the open gateway. The professor pushed aside the gate, and went in like a man who has a purpose. She followed, but it was only when she stood in the deep-arched doorway, and he looked back to her, with his hand upon the door, that she realized why they had come here.

"Is it *now*?" she asked, with a frightened voice, leaning against the stones.

"Are you sorry? Do you repent? Wait — think a moment," and his hand fell from the door. "It is not yet too late."

The noise of the street was in her ears ; the voices of the children, the odor of the flowers, came to her. Afterwards, when she remembered this time, all these were more vividly present to her mind than any words.

" You are not a child, that I should lead you against your will. Still, God knows, I have thought this best for you. And yet," he added, " if you should ever regret it ! I could not bear that, Katey ! "

The children shouted at their play. Their shrill voices sounded above the roar of the city. All at once the tones of the organ rolled out, bearing the chanted prayer to her ears. She had not thought of a service at this hour, and upon a week-day, as it was. It came in a great wave, dying away in the lingering " A-men." Katey had listened breathlessly. She drew a long sigh at its close.

" I am not sorry," she said, softly. " It frightened me ; that is all. It is so sudden and strange. No, I do not repent, and I am ready now. "

He pushed open the inner door. The service was just concluded, the last strains of the organ floating off among the groined arches of the roof. A soft twilight enwrapped the clustered columns ; the rays of sunlight through the rich stained windows fell aslant upon the floor in quivering rainbows. There was no congregation, save an old woman, who rose from kneeling in a pew behind one of the pillars to shuffle softly out, and a party of strangers—an elderly gentleman and a young girl, who had been sitting near the door. They, too, rose now, and began to walk about, pausing to examine the carved designs over the organ-loft.

The clergyman, in his white gown, closed the book

before him with a hasty movement, and disappeared through a little door behind the desk. He was a young man. Did he find the service a weariness so soon? Or was he impatient that the prayers had died away among the pillars without response?

The silence, the hush of the place, the noise of the city, subdued to a great sobbing sigh, like that which comes from an over-full heart, the faint chill which fell upon her as she stepped in out of the sunshine, brought a strange awe to Katey, sitting in one corner of the great dark pew by the door. The professor had followed the minister. Left thus alone, she nevertheless did not consider deliberately and gravely the step she was about to take — the new life she was entering upon with so little preparation. In that last confused moment, before any great event in life, there is no sober reflection. Hopes and fears, recollections, and a sense of the commonest things around us, crowd close against the door about to be opened. They jostle and tread upon each other.

Shivering in her corner, partly from nervousness, and partly from the chill of the place, Katey watched the rays of light falling at her feet from the painted window above her, and remembered the tinkling pendants to the candelabra in the old house on Poplar Street, which she and Jack had placed in the sunlight many a time, evoking rainbows more wonderful than these. Dear old Jack! Would he be angry with her for this? And Delphine, what would she say? A sudden misgiving and fear seized her — a desire to push open the folding door behind her, and run away from her promise; out into the crowded streets, somewhere, anywhere. He would not pursue her; he

would never try to bring her back. And then there was a little stir in the distance, the closing of a door; and just as it comes to us all sometimes, when we are tempted to do the wildest, most unconventional deeds, a spirit of mischief or recklessness having entered in and taken possession of us, suddenly the lights are turned on, the bell rings, the curtain rises, we shake out our draperies, draw on our gloves, and step out before the audience which greets us each and all daily, without a thought, even, of the moment before and its temptation. So, as Katey bent forward, half rising, her hand upon the back of the seat before her, her head turned to the door, all at once there was a movement in the further corner. The clergyman, in his robes, appeared again; the professor was coming towards her. She rose, to be sure, but she had already forgotten the door, the streets, and her wild impulse. They passed down the aisle in the dim, soft light, her hand trembling a little upon the professor's arm. And yet she was not afraid; she did not repent, now that the time had come. The words of the exhortation passed like the rustle of leaves in the wind upon her hearing. What was this her own voice was saying? A break in the service brought her back to herself.

"Who giveth this woman to be married to this man?"

A silence followed the words. No one had been provided. They were a strange, forlorn bridal party, without friends. "Jack ought to be here!" thought Katey, with a little sobbing gasp.

All in a moment, before she breathed again, a deep, pleasant voice behind her spoke: "Will you allow

me?" The elderly gentleman whom she had noticed when they entered the church stepped forward and took her hand, and the service went on, the professor removing a ring from his own finger to put upon hers.

In the moment of confusion, at its close, Katey found herself receiving congratulations from the gentleman who had offered his services so opportunely.

"I shall feel an interest in your future, madam," he said, "since I have had a hand in its disposal."

He beckoned to his daughter, who came up timidly. She was a sweet-faced young girl; and when she hesitated, and then held up her lips, Katey brightened and warmed inwardly. It was not an utterly forlorn wedding party, after all; it was something to have had good wishes, even from strangers. They came down the aisle together, but as they neared the door, Katey hung back, and their new acquaintances politely bade them adieu.

"They are stopping at a hotel close by," said the professor, who had exchanged cards, and some words which Katey did not hear, with the old gentleman, as the two followed the young lady and herself down through the church. "I wish I had taken you there. It is not too late now. I must leave you somewhere for an hour. Our train will not start until late, — I think about nine. I have to inquire and telegraph to Professor Payne."

"Must I go there, — to the hotel?" and Katey still hung back. "I'm afraid —" and then she hesitated. She laughed, blushing a little over the confession. "I don't believe I could bear the eyes of the women. They would stare so at my gown."

The professor glanced hastily from the scarlet wing in her hat to the tip of the slender, dusty boot.

"I confess my ignorance as to such matters," he said, "but I thought your costume very picturesque and becoming. I am sure more than one turned to look after you as we came up the street."

"And no wonder," laughed Katey; "to kilt one's gown like this, especially on such a bright, clear day, would attract attention anywhere."

The professor knit his brows in thought. "Suppose you let it down?"

"But it is torn;" and she spread out the folds. I have lost my gloves, too. A great many sins might be forgiven a woman, but not bare hands in the street," she added; "and I fear that altogether I do not look respectable. At least I have not that inner consciousness of being well-dressed which makes one equal to any occasion. I—I—can't go. Don't think I mind it," she said, quickly; "only," she added, truthfully, "*I believe I do.*" At which womanly way of stating the difficulty, the professor laughed.

They had moved on slowly to the porch. Doubtless no bride had ever before stood here devising her trousseau!

"Could you not go out and buy some of these things? We have time enough."

If time were only true money!

"I could—yes; but, you see, I—I neglected to bring away my purse."

She tried to hide her embarrassment with a sweeping courtesy, spreading out the folds of the torn gown.

"King Cophetua, I look very like a beggar-maid—do I not?" she said, with another little laugh.

"You look —" began the professor; but an old, gray-headed sexton shambled out from the church at that moment and stood in the doorway, and the sentence never was finished. "That can easily be remedied," the professor said, quickly, "if we only have time. I will leave you here, then. I shall not be gone more than an hour. You will not close the church at present, I suppose?" he said to the sexton.

"Eh?" and the old man turned his face towards them.

The professor repeated the question.

"Close 'e church? Lord, no! We don't never close her. 'Cept for an hour or two at midnight. And that's all the thanks we get; just a-prayin' here and a-prayin', and the choir a-chantin', and my newew a-spendin' his strength a-blowin' at the belluses, and all for nothin'; folks don't care enough about their perishin' souls to come in and say amen." And still muttering to himself, he wandered back into the church again.

"Then you had better stay here," said the professor to Katey.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THERE'S ROSEMARY ; THAT'S FOR REMEMBRANCE.

SHE stepped out into the garden when he had left her. The children had gone, and the people hurrying by paid little heed to her or to the flowers. Only a party of emigrants strolling up from the dock, dark-eyed, listless in manner, brightened at sight of the blossoms. A dusky-eyed boy among them pulled at his mother's faded blue gown, and uttered a quick, sharp exclamation in an unknown tongue. He pointed to the gay salvias, and held out his hand to Katey, as he lingered behind the others. If she might only have given him one spray ! But a notice before her eyes warned all persons against picking the flowers. She pointed to it, shaking her head. He seemed to understand ; he nodded and smiled a wonderful smile, all flash of eyes and gleam of white teeth, then throwing a kiss, half saucily, half in gallantry, from the tips of his fingers, hastened after the others.

"Be you the bride?" and Katey looked up to find the old sexton regarding her curiously. He stood in the doorway, his cap pushed back from his roughened, grisly locks, his hands upon his hips, with the air of a man who rests at last from his labors.

"I was married just now, in there," Katey replied, modestly, motioning towards the church. To be a

bride would seem to involve various attending circumstances — something of display, the rejoicing of friends, all of which had been lacking at her wedding.

"H'm," he groaned, reflectively. "A good many brides come here, first and last. We make a deal o' happiness an' misery, I reckon. It's a lesson to some of 'em," he added, grimly,

"Yes," Katey assented, gravely, "I suppose it is," when he paused for a response.

"P'raps you'd like some flowers?" And he moved rheumatically out from the doorway.

"I should, indeed."

"'Tain't often I have a chance to give a nosegay to a bride. They come, mostly, in their fine carriages, with their frumpery an' their furbelows, a-carryin' their own flowers a-danglin' from their arms. Simperin' an' gigglin' often, with no sense o' the solemnness o' the place or the vows they're a-goin' to take on 'em. To see 'em, year in and year out, gives one an awful sense o' the hollowness o' things. There," — and he pulled a ravelling from his frayed coat sleeve, and tied up the posies, as he knelt in the path, — "they all have a sweet smell; none o' your brazen-faced, flauntin' things, good for nothin' but to stare at. You're welcome, ma'am," when Katey thanked him warmly. "They're fresh and sweet, and maybe when they're withered you'll like to keep 'em to remember the day. I hope it'll always seem kind o' sunshiny to look back to. I ain't entered upon the state myself, yet," — and he rested his hands on his back, as he rose up slowly and painfully, — "but it seems to me it's a kind o' bearin' o' one another's burdens, and that always brings a blessin', you know."

He shuffled off down the path, and disappeared within the church door, leaving the flowers in Katey's hand, and very solemn, tender thoughts in her heart. She had taken this step — as she did so many in her life — from an impulse of strong feeling, unselfish, perhaps, but none the less likely to entail sorrow. She had hardly realized the awkward situation in which she found herself; but she had been touched by the professor's tender, chivalrous care, and, above all, by the revelation of his unsuspected affection for her. And yet that had frightened and distressed her. She had so little to give in return — only her faith, her entire trust. Though, did she but know it, they were the germs of a deeper love than any she dreamed of now.

The old man's words lingered in her ears, when she had wandered back to the church and seated herself in the corner of one of the carved pews to wait there in the gathering darkness for her husband's return. Her husband! She had not considered seriously, calmly, as she should have, perhaps; but she would be a true wife to him now. And thinking thus, a peace like the fulfilment of a blessed promise fell upon her with the shadows. She had uttered the words of assent before the altar in a dull, stunned way, without any sense of their meaning; it was now, in the peaceful twilight, turning upon her finger the ring, which still felt strange and out of place, that she made her marriage vow.

Night came early in the church. It was quite dark when the doors opened, and she started to meet a step upon the stones. Outside the day still lingered, loath to go.

"I have been detained," said the professor. "I hope the time has not been dull."

"O, no!" She displayed her flowers and told of the interview with the old sexton; but she kept back the words which had touched her most. She had thought in the dim old church to tell it all, with what had been in her heart; but it did not seem so easy to do now, out in the bustling streets.

They went about from one place to another upon their odd shopping expedition. To replace the torn gown at a moment's notice was impossible. Neither art nor skill had travelled so far at that time; but Katey found a pretty wrap, hooded and tasselled, which fell to her feet, hiding all imperfections, — a deep, bright tartan, which set off well the graceful figure and dark, sweet face. A bonnet, with bands and loops in the same rich hues, completed the transformation.

"It makes a difference," she said, drawing on the gloves of an unobtrusive tint, which had been the acme of her desires. "I am conscious of being now a thoroughly respectable member of society. I felt like a gypsy before. I believe I could have played a tambourine or told fortunes upon the curbstones, with no sense of inappropriateness or of surprise at myself."

"It will be wise in me to attend to your outward adorning, then," rejoined the professor, "lest I find you haranguing a multitude, because your hat chances to have a strong-minded cant, or following a hand-organ, because you have forgotten your gloves."

He spoke absently. Her light words had called up only a brief, grave smile. How unlike his manner was to that of the impassioned speaker in the dull farmhouse parlor only a few hours before! She remem-

bered, all at once, that he had said no word of gladness that she was his wife; he had not even called her by that new name. He was Professor Dyce again; quiet, grave, and calm. For a little time he had been some one entirely new and strange to her. There flashed upon her mind the recollection of a carriage which had driven past the open window where she stood once, long ago. It held a bridal party, which had just left the door of the church. In that flash, as the carriage dashed by, she had seen the bridegroom's face—the proud, happy face turned to the woman beside him. She had never thought of it since. But it seemed it had staid in her memory to rise now. How silly! she thought, vexed with herself. As if he had nothing to think of at this moment but the questionable happiness of possessing her! And she ran down the steps and slipped her hand into his arm.

"Well," he said, brightly, "and now?"

"I believe that is all; I am more than satisfied; I fear I am wickedly happy and vain."

"You have gained the inner consciousness, then?"

"O, more than that."

"Well, we have still an hour before the train leaves. We can go directly to the station, and take our tea there while we wait, or to the hotel."

"Let us go to the station," Katey said. So they walked slowly on up the streets, twinkling with lights now, and full of an eager crowd of people going their several ways, each intent upon his own business or pleasure, but all hurrying—whither?

They lingered long over their tea in the quiet waiting-room of the station; then, at last, the train swept in with the shriek of a whistle and the clang

of bells, and soon they were rushing away towards La Fayette. All manner of vague apprehensions rose in Katey's mind as they neared their destination. The events of the past two days had been so strange, that she had hardly anticipated an hour. "What could they say to us? What could they do?" rose to her lips many times, as, with her face pressed against the window, she watched the sparks flying by in the darkness, and realized how swiftly they were being borne to meet this judgment, whatever it might be. The professor was absorbed in his own thoughts. But at the last, as they were leaving the train, she felt that she must speak.

"Tell me," she whispered, while her heart beat violently, as they were delayed a moment by the rush of in-coming passengers, "what shall I say to them all?"

It was a comprehensive question; but she had uttered the first words which occurred to her.

"Say as little as possible," was the professor's reply. "I think I can trust to your discretion."

But in her discretion, of which every one else was assured, Katey had no confidence whatever.

Foremost among the jostling, hurrying crowd, when they reached the platform, was Professor Payne. Surprise almost took away Katey's breath. It was all confusion; there was a hurried word of greeting, the utterance of her new name; but she gathered nothing more until she heard Professor Dyce say,—

"I thought of taking her to the hotel."

"Don't consider it for a moment," Professor Payne replied, in a tone which was certainly cordial. "You are both expected at the school. This way; I took

occasion to engage a carriage ;" and almost before she knew it, Katey found herself seated in it and whirling rapidly up the hill. Nothing dreadful was to happen, then, after all ? The shock was almost too great to bear. She had tried to nerve herself for combat. It was a tilt against a windmill.

Kind, timid Miss Hersey opened the door when they reached the house. She greeted Katey with a warmth quite unlike her usual shy, cool manner. Did no one blame her ? Would no one look coldly upon her ? Ah, but it would have been different if she had not returned as Professor Dyce's wife ! In the excitement of the moment she did not notice by which door they had entered, until she found herself in what had formerly been the president's parlor.

" We thought you had better take these rooms, at least for the present," Miss Hersey said. " You'll find them rather bare ; but that can be remedied later."

The pretty personal effects, the quaint foreign ornaments, all which had given to the room its peculiar charm, were gone ; the plain, heavy furniture alone remained. But a bright fire burned in the grate, and upon the mantel was a bouquet so large, the flowers of so rare a kind, that no one but Clary Luckiwinner could ever have chosen it. And who should come flying in at this moment to seize her about the neck but Clary herself, her eyes swollen, her face shining from past tears and present rejoicing.

" She begged so hard that I allowed her to sit up for you," Miss Hersey said, apologetically. " But you must go now, Clary ; Mrs. Dyce is tired, I presume."

Clary tore herself reluctantly away, but not before Katey had admired and thanked her for the startling

bouquet which threatened every moment to topple into the grate. Professor Payne and Miss Hersey still lingered.

"Perhaps," suggested the former, rubbing his dry hands and regarding the professor and Katey with a delighted air which was beyond all comprehension to the persons most interested, — "perhaps they would like to partake of some refreshments?"

But they declined. "We took tea at A——," Katey explained.

"Then we will bid you good night."

"I should like to see you a few moments in the library," Professor Dyce said to Professor Payne, as the latter was leaving the room. "I will come to you there immediately."

Katey had followed Miss Hersey to the hall, where she astonished the good woman by throwing her arms around her neck, and kissing her warmly.

"That is 'good night,'" she said, with a little laugh. But away down in her heart she knew it expressed much more, which she could not put into words. She came back and stood before the fire, taking off her hat and the pretty bright wrap. She heard the door close, and Professor Payne's step dying away. She was thinking — as the most trivial thoughts do flit through our minds when we are in the midst of the most startling or care-bearing events — how odd it was to be bareheaded again! — just that, as she smoothed back her hair.

"Poor girl," said the professor, leaning upon the mantel, and regarding her with tender, curious eyes, "were you very anxious?"

"O, very, for a little while. I almost thought they would turn us out of doors."

He smiled, but the gray eyes flashed.

"They would not have dared to do that. But I must go to Professor Payne. I shall tell him the whole — as far as the circumstances of our losing the way, and all that, are concerned," he corrected himself. "He is a thoroughly just man, and will aid me in getting at the truth. I must learn what has taken place here, too, before I meet the school to-morrow." He crossed the room to the door while he was speaking; then he came back. "It is not an inviting home," he said, gently; "but my wife is very welcome." His lips touched her forehead; then he was gone.

She stood for a moment where he had left her, the heavy wrap half slipped from her shoulders and still grasped with one hand, a faint color called up to her face; then she awoke from her reverie with a start, and set herself to examine her surroundings. There was a dressing-room just beyond the parlor, she knew; and here again some slight attempt to prepare for her coming had been made. Her gowns were hanging in the wardrobe, her books piled upon the floor without any attempt at arrangement. The showy toilet articles upon the table were Clary's gift, she knew. Much as she desired employment, restless as she was at this moment, she could not put herself to setting anything in order. Everything was unreal and strange. She could not divest herself of the idea that she should be called upon in a moment to start again. She could not realize that her wanderings were over. She was turning away when her eyes fell upon a letter, unnoticed before, upon the white marble of the dressing-table. She caught it up, a great throb of terror whitening her face. It was from Dacre Home.

Why had he written to her now? She held it still unopened in her hands. O, how bitter was the past! If she could only blot it out! She had no sense of pain—only a dull, aching regret. “It was for nothing,” she said—the anxiety, the striving, the praying even. Why had this come to her, to bring it all back, when she thought she had forgotten? He was nothing to her now; and yet the letter was like a temptation. If she could only open it! Perhaps he had confessed all to Christine, as she had urged him to do in her letter; perhaps he had changed his course; she should be so glad to know; and yet she turned it over in her hand. It was crumpled and torn at the edges, and bore many post-marks. It must have been written long ago, and wandered far. She read the superscription—*Miss Katherine Earle*. It was not to her, after all; it was written for a girl who was no man’s wife! Professor Dyce’s strong, grave face rose suddenly before her. He would come to her presently—her husband, whom she had promised this day to love and honor; there should be no thought in her heart, please God, which she should be ashamed or afraid for him to know. She returned to the parlor. The fire still blazed in the grate. She laid the letter upon the coals, where it flamed for a moment, then died to ashes. Then she sat down to await the conclusion of the conference in the library.



SHE LAID THE LETTER UPON THE COALS, WHERE IT FLAMED FOR A
MOMENT, THEN DIED TO ASHES. Page 296.

CHAPTER XXVII.

UNTANGLING THE SKEIN.

IT was as they had suspected. Miss Wormley returned to town with her charge the afternoon of the picnic without waiting for the professor and Katey, or making any effort to find them. Long before they could have reached the spot to which she had sent them, she joined the girls, who were already collected outside the woods, in the fields adjoining the road. She made a feint of lingering here, then led the way at a slow pace down the road towards the village, where they were to take the omnibuses. Some of the girls ventured to demur, and suggested that they should go on alone to town, and leave Miss Wormley and one of the older girls to return and seek the two who, being strangers to the locality, had, perhaps, already lost their way. But to this she would not listen for a moment, "What! leave the girls to go back to town just at nightfall alone?"

She would return to town at once, though half of La Fayette wandered lost among the woods and hills. It was no fault of hers if laggards were left behind. She had warned them.

"But you sent them away," said Clary Luckiwinner, growing bold in her terror. "I went back for my basket, and I saw you —"

"Silence, Miss Luckiwinner, and return to your place; you break the line." And so she marshalled them all like a skilful tactician, as she was, and, putting herself at the head, led the procession from the omnibus station down to the school.

"They went for a walk, you say," repeated Professor Payne, nervously, when she immediately laid the matter before him. She was sufficiently wise to say little — nothing, in fact, but that the delinquents had wandered away, and failed to return in time to take the omnibus. "They must have strayed farther than they intended. It was thoughtless, certainly; but the next omnibus will bring them, without doubt."

"And you think I was right to return with the girls? I had no one to send after them, you know, and if we had lingered there until dark —"

"O, to be sure," answered the professor. "Your duty, unquestionably, was to see that the girls were cared for and returned at a proper time." And he went home to tea somewhat annoyed, but not at all uneasy as to the final result.

When he came back later in the evening, and there were still no tidings of the professor and Katey, he began to be seriously alarmed. The conviction that they had lost their way forced itself upon his mind. He knew something of the locality where they had spent the afternoon. It was wild and sparsely settled. With night coming on, and even by daylight, one might wander for hours here without coming upon a house or the turnpike, which wound among the hills. He called Miss Hersey and Miss Wormley, the only teachers in the house, for consultation. The growing excitement among the girls necessitated some action, even

if common humanity did not demand it. It was long past the hour of retiring, but still white-robed figures flitted about the dormitory halls or gathered upon the stairs. The hasty opening of the library door, where the three teachers had met together, was followed by the sound of scurrying feet and the disappearance of ghostly forms into the darkness of the music-room and up the stairway beyond.

And now, at the midnight council held in the library, Miss Wormley ventured to go a step farther. It was useless, in her opinion, — which, perhaps, counted for nothing, — to search for the missing ones, since they were, doubtless, miles away before this time.

"I — I do not understand." Professor Payne's mind was slow in its operation. He stared at her almost stupidly; his under jaw dropped, his faded blue eyes fixed in their expression of perplexity.

"I mean," she went on, boldly, "that no one could be lost there in broad daylight. That is all."

She threw up her chin by a sudden movement as she spoke, bringing her eyes upon a level with a row of volumes in the library devoted to the discussion of original sin. It was good to see the air of conscious and severe virtue displayed in her countenance at this moment.

"For shame!" exclaimed Miss Hersey, hotly. "There is nothing so mean as insinuations — and against those who cannot defend themselves!" She paused, frightened at her own boldness. The over-charged weapon had recoiled; she began to cry.

Poor, timid little Professor Payne was at his wit's end. He had called them together for deliberation; the result seemed likely to be a quarrel. Uncon-

sciously his strong sense of justice ranged him upon Miss Hersey's side.

"Do I understand you to prefer charges against Professor Dyce and Miss Earle?" he demanded, with a kind of trembling severity in his voice.

"O, no, no! Not at all! I have no charges to prefer. It is nothing to *me*, I am sure;" and Miss Wormley seemed to scent a very pleasing and tranquillizing odor in the air, quite above the heads of her companions.

"If you mean to say that they have gone away deliberately, we can easily decide that by visiting their rooms," said Miss Hersey, who had recovered her dignity by this time, through wrath, which does more than self-control, sometimes, towards drying tears. "We should be likely, in that case, to find a note stating their intention, or, at least, some signs of preparation. I think we had better proceed at once," she said to Professor Payne, who, by this time, was in a state of mind to accept any suggestion.

Led by Miss Hersey, they proceeded to Katey's room, followed and accompanied by the soft rustle of garments, the stealthy, muffled sound of unseen feet, the opening and closing of doors in the darkness but feebly lighted by the lamp in Miss Hersey's hand — all of which ghostly sounds they were too much engrossed to heed or notice. The door was unlocked. Everything in the little corner room appeared as usual — upon the table an open book, a bit of embroidery half completed; the very air of the place, as the light flared into it, was peace and expectation of return.

They descended the stairs without speaking, and

went on down to the class-rooms, among which was the professor's study. The door was locked, but after a time a key was found to open it. Here, too, were no marks of disorder, no suggestion of change. Miss Wormley's eyes fastened upon a sheet of paper lying upon the writing-table. It was a half-written letter. The ink had dried upon the pen thrown down beside it when the writer was called away. She took it up.

"Really," began Professor Payne, "we have no right —"

"Listen to this," said Miss Wormley, triumphantly, and read aloud: "'You will not be surprised at anything you hear of me, since my future movements are so uncertain, especially if you learn that I have left here suddenly —'" And there the letter broke off.

Even Miss Hersey was startled. "It may not refer to this matter at all," she said at last, recovering herself. "We all know him to have had large interests at stake here. The suit was decided some little time ago in his favor. There is nothing, certainly, to keep him here."

"Then you do believe he has gone?" Miss Wormley said, maliciously.

"In this way? No." But in truth Miss Hersey did not know what to believe.

They returned to the library. To retire to their own rooms was out of the question. The weight of responsibility upon two, at least, of the party, banished all thought of sleep.

Daylight struggled in at the window, and still they had decided upon no course of action. Miss Wormley dozed in her chair. Professor Payne and Miss Hersey, chilled, anxious, and miserable in body and mind, after

their night of watching, still conversed together in low tones at intervals. If Professor Dyce had left not to return, steps must be taken to fill his place. The trustees must be informed at once. What, and how much, should be told the girls? Who would fill the vacant places in the class-rooms? or could the school go on as usual? All these considerations began to press upon them with the dawn. Though Miss Hersey had denied stoutly that the letter found in his study had anything to do with Professor Dyce's disappearance, and Professor Payne was inclined to agree with her, it had still so far influenced both, that nothing was now said of sending in search of them.

"I suppose we had better have prayers, as usual," suggested Professor Payne at last, when signs of life began to make themselves apparent throughout the house. The poor man appeared more pinched, and withered, and yellow than ever, as he rose up and straightened himself feebly.

"Prayers!" exclaimed Miss Wormley, in a sharp voice. "You had better go into the school-room, and inform the girls that their precious teachers have absconded, and there will be no lessons, or prayers either, till you have laid the matter before the authorities. Even if they should dare attempt to return now —"

"Miss — Miss Wormley," interrupted the professor, "there is, so far as I can see, no occasion to create anarchy or disorder. I shall of course put the whole matter into the hands of the trustees; but in the mean time, you will please say nothing to any one upon the subject;" and with an unusual straightening of the thin figure, causing a surprising number of wrinkles never seen before in the back of the rusty black coat,

the little man walked stiffly out of the room towards the study-hall.

Regret that he had not despatched some one at once in search of the missing ones grew upon him every moment, especially when the curiosity and excitement among the girls became manifest. The very fact that they had differed so widely upon the questions of the day, and that a coldness had in consequence sprung up between them, made the just little man, who was left in this dilemma to manage affairs, fearful lest he had not done his duty. And at last, when the school had been organized for the day, with an attempt to make a show of going on as usual, he slipped out of the house, and engaged a man to mount a horse and scour the country in the neighborhood of the picnic ground. But of this he said nothing to any one.

Clary's distress can be imagined, perhaps; it was beyond the power of description. She dissolved to tears before the omnibuses were gained, and wept from that time forward in a feeble, heart-broken way, with occasional respites of wrath, odd little unexpected bursts of anger, which dried her tears for a time, and perhaps saved her from entire liquefaction. No attempt at discipline could affect her conduct in the least. She wandered about, or made a lay figure in the school-room, neither studying nor attending the recitations of her classes, with ability to do nothing but mop her eyes with delicate little lace-edged handkerchiefs — for grief, even, with Clary, must have its attendant magnificence. Although by no means profound in her reasoning on ordinary occasions, she developed now a skill and acuteness in conjoining circumstances, with a boldness in uttering convictions,

which did much towards fostering and strengthening public opinion in favor of the absent ones, besides stirring up suspicion and girlish outspoken scorn — which know neither bounds nor reason — against Miss Wormley. Her position was by no means an enviable one, even before the afternoon, when the despatch from Professor Dyce arrived, falling like a bomb in their midst. "I shall return to La Fayette by the evening train, with Miss Earle, who is now my wife," it read. There was nothing more.

To say that Professor Payne — whose messenger had returned before now from his useless quest — rejoiced, would too feebly express it. If anything so dried and stiffened into shape as his countenance could be said to fairly shine and sparkle, this was true of it now. He walked directly into the school-room, stepped upon the platform before Miss Hersey, who was trying to enforce the semblance of a study hour, with the assurance of utter self-forgetfulness, and read the message aloud, ending it with a kind of glorified glare at the girls, conceived as a radiant smile. And they appreciated the act, bless their dear warm hearts, north and south! For the first time they understood each other. A great shout went up from the whole school. They sprang from their seats, and crowded around the little man, who by this time had retired into his shell again, frightened at himself and them. But they would not be repulsed, and with a little nervous laugh, and a trembling quaver in his weak voice, he could only assure them, over and over again, that he really knew nothing but what he had learned from the despatch. Miss Wormley, passing through the school-room, heard the message, felt the shout of joy

like the trembling of the earth under her feet, and crept away to her own room to hide her mortification and rage as best she could. She had failed. There remained nothing for her but to accept the fact, and try to avert whatever consequences would be likely to fall upon her head. At least they could prove nothing against her. Even Professor Dyce must acknowledge that her duty was to return to town with the girls in her charge. If no one was sent after them, — for she knew nothing of Professor Payne's attempt, — it was not her fault alone. Certainly she should not lose her position in the school. If it came to that, public sentiment in the town would sustain her against Professor Dyce. There was but one rule in these days of excited feeling by which any man's conduct was to be measured, and there the professor would fall short. He was a marked man now, she knew. He must go before long, or suffer the consequences of remaining. Could she not hasten his departure — or worse? She could *do* nothing. She was a woman, and believed in a woman's circumscribed sphere; but a spring touched by the lightest fingers moves mightily sometimes.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

NORTH AND SOUTH.

MISS WORMLEY was the first to greet the professor and Katey when they descended to breakfast the next morning. She had decided upon her course of action, in which affability and a show of warm interest were to take a prominent part.

"We were very anxious about you for a time," she said to Professor Dyce.

The girls, who had gathered around them, waited breathlessly for what would follow.

"Ah, were you?" the professor replied, with an odd smile; "there was no occasion, you see;" and he passed on to his place. He had no desire for a scene; he could afford to be generous; but above all, he did not intend to gratify the curiosity which spoke in every line of the woman's face. With the exception of Professor Payne and Miss Hersey, no one in the house knew, or should be made to know, of the events of the past two days. Among the girls it came to be believed that they had chosen this abrupt manner of changing their relations to avoid comment, and a prolonged discussion of the act; and as everything at once went on as usual, except that Katey resigned her classes, excitement and curiosity soon died out. Professor Payne's hesitation, and the slow process by

which he reached any conclusion, served them well, since he had not yet laid the matter before the trustees when the telegraphic message arrived. Something of the story did creep out into the town, where Professor Dyce was already conspicuous for the suit he had recently gained, as well as for his northern sympathies. People wondered that he still pursued his medical studies, and held his position in the school, now that all personal effort for his support was unnecessary. It could only be accounted for upon the ground of eccentricity, to which this strange episode, concerning which various fanciful stories were told, was also attributed. One may do the most unheard-of deeds with tolerable impunity when once the reputation for oddity is well established.

Katey's first act when the professor had left her to attend his classes, the morning after their return, was to write Delphine and Jack of her marriage, reserving all particulars of the event until they should meet. Delphine's reply reached her some days before Jack's, her letter to him having strayed in many directions before finally gaining his camp upon the Potomac. The Estemeres, it seemed, had already returned from the continent, and were in London. They would sail for home, probably, in a fortnight. Mr. Estemere, alarmed at the depredations of the Confederate cruisers, believed further delay to be dangerous, and had concluded his business as hastily as possible.

"MY DEAR KATEY [Delphine wrote]: To think you are married! I can hardly write for astonishment. And you said there were no young men at La Fayette! I remember something of Mr. Dyce, or I

have certainly heard of him through the Homes, and congratulate you heartily — *and him*. If it were any one but you, dear, I confess I should be shocked and alarmed; but you always were the soul of prudence, and have grown to have the coolest little head imaginable. I dare trust you, Katey, and am prepared to thoroughly like my brother-in-law. Of course you will come to us at once upon our return home."

Then she went on to speak of their intentions, and change of plan.

"The soul of prudence!" thought Katey, laying down the letter. How little Delphine knew of her!

Jack's reply came a few days later. The professor brought it in one evening. She was sitting in the president's parlor, which was her parlor now, a little dull, a little — not lonely, perhaps, but she missed the noisy girls always invading the corner room in the other building upon the slightest pretext, or quite as often upon none at all, and Clary, who had been her shadow, but whom she saw less frequently now. She missed, too, the cares and duties which had formerly filled all her days, and made every hour of rest and leisure a real delight; she was not yet wonted to her new life.

The long room was still bare and uninviting. They had made no attempt to beautify it. "We may go any day," the professor said. So, although a month had elapsed since they came here, her books and pictures, gathered hastily from the other house, had never been set in their places, or hung upon the walls. It was like a cheerless caravansary, where they rested for a night, before taking up their pilgrimage again.

She had been alone for an hour. She was often alone now. It was not the dullness of the place, nor of her life, after all, which had so affected her. Many women had been happier with less of luxury or society about them; *she* had been happier camping in the open fields; but there had risen between the husband and wife of so short a time a coldness and reserve to which every day added its stone. Or, more truly, there had been no open confidence between them from the first. Katey was awed, and driven back upon herself, in the parlor of the little farm-house, by the revelation of the professor's passionate love. She had come now almost to doubt her judgment on that day. Certainly nothing could be more grave and undemonstrative than his manner towards her since then; thoughtful, too thoughtful at times of her comfort, since she had grown to look upon his tender care as prompted by duty alone. He had doubtless been disappointed in her — they were so nearly strangers to each other, although they had lived so long beneath the same roof; or had it only been pity and generosity, of which she had taken such cruel advantage? Could she have been so mistaken? She had tried at the first to be her own natural self, with the result peculiar to a novice in acting a part. She appeared only constrained and self-conscious. All the odd, impulsive ways in which her nature had been used to speak unconsciously, were checked now. Truly there is no one so difficult to copy as one's self.

She had thought, sitting alone in the church that day, waiting for the professor to come, how she would strive to please him, being, even then, she could see now, proud, as well as sure, of his affection, which in time she would be able, without doubt, to return.

Poor, foolish Katey ! full of fancies and unattainable ideas, blinding her to the present and the real ! And now it was all changed ; even in these few short weeks everything seemed changed. Nothing in the world appeared to her of so much value as his love, and yet she had lost it. How ? when ? or had it ever been hers ? She could not tell.

She had moved about restlessly all through the day, unable to put herself to work, with no desire to take up a book. The mood had passed now like a fever turn, and left her quiet, but languid and weak. Professor Payne had intercepted her husband on his way from tea, and drawn him into the library. He came to the parlor a moment, before going over to the school-room for the evening study hour. The shutters were closed, the gas was lighted, and Katey sat over the fire, her hands folded listlessly in her lap. Her hair was drawn back from her face. Was it this, or the light falling upon it from above, which made it appear paler than it used, and had laid heavy shadows under the eyes ?

He stood just within the door, regarding the drooping figure with an expression of anxiety, almost of pain.

"Do you want anything ? Can I do anything ?" And she rose in a flurried way, becoming aware of his presence at last.

"I am on my way to the school-room ; perhaps you would like to go." He had hesitated over the suggestion, coming forward as he uttered it.

"No, thank you." And she sat down again ; but now she took some work from the little stand beside her, and began to busy herself over it.

He leaned against the mantel, looking down upon

the bent head and slender, nervous fingers, which trembled a little under his eyes. One of them bore the odd chased ring which had belonged to his mother; it was Katey's wedding ring. He sighed as he turned away to the door again.

Katey dropped her work when he had gone. She rested her head upon her hand, and fell to dreaming. It might have been an hour, it might have been only a moment, when the door opened, and he appeared again. "Miss Hersey will sit in the school-room to-night," he said when Katey's face expressed her surprise. Then he laid a letter upon the table before her. From Jack! Her listlessness vanished at once. Her eyes shone, her face was all eagerness and delight, as she tore it open.

It was a very brief letter, indited after Jack's customary style, which rivalled the proverbs of Solomon in conciseness, but with a boldness of chirography which made up for all deficiencies of material, and spread the few words over the whole sheet.

"DEAR KATEY [he wrote]: Mail about to close; so I hasten to send a line. Yours just rec'd. I am astonished at you; expected you would do something unheard-of away off there alone. You never could take care of yourself. [Ah, *Jack* knew.] I shall come on as soon as I can get a leave of absence, and see what is to be done. In the mean time you must go directly to Josie. [The professor was quite ignored in his calculations.] Shall write her by this mail. She is not coming to Washington at present, our movements are so uncertain.

"In haste, your affec. brother,

"JACK."

Katey laughed as she read the letter, much as she used to laugh long ago, or even a little time ago, before the chill which had checked everything like merriment had crept over her. It was so like hot-headed Jack, who evidently believed that his presence alone was necessary to annul the marriage, and make all as it should be !

Professor Dyce was lying back in an arm-chair, regarding her as she read it. The weary expression which was becoming habitual to his face, lifted for a moment at the sound of her laugh. She turned to him, with a little quick, natural movement, holding out the letter. Then she drew it back ; she had discovered a postscript.

"Whom should I meet one day here but Dacre Home," Jack wrote. "He is in the camp adjoining ours. Deserted from the rebels, they say, but is awfully plucky. Won some bars for his sleeve at Big Bethel, where, according to the boys, he tried to throw his life away. It may make a man of him yet. He knows me, of course ; but we never speak."

Katey read it, her face growing warm. It might, indeed, make a man of him, as Jack said. Poor Christine ! would it add any joy to her life ?

She held the letter in her hands, hesitating an instant before giving it to the professor. She was ashamed, feeling her face so warm ; Dacre Home's name had never been mentioned between them. She was glad, only glad for this hope of his future ; but would the professor understand it ? She almost wished Jack had not written of him.

The professor saw the blush, marked the momentary hesitation. "It is from Jack," she said, holding it out to him.

"And what does Jack say?" He spoke in the grave, kind tone to which Katey was so accustomed, but made no movement to take the letter.

"It is very short; won't you read it? Only don't mind Jack," she added, hastily, remembering the first part of the letter, which, for the moment, had slipped from her memory. She watched his face, over which an amused smile passed as he read the few lines referring to their marriage. "He has always taken care of me," she explained, quickly.

"Yes, I see;" and he fell into a reverie.

He had not turned the page. Should she remind him of the postscript, or let it pass?

"There is something more upon the other side," she said; and he took up the sheet again. As his eyes left the last word, they were lifted to hers; but there was neither doubt nor suspicion in the glance.

"I am very glad," she said, quietly, meeting his glance without shrinking. "It may do everything for him, as Jack says." Then she bent over her work as she went on, "I know a girl who will rejoice over any good news of him, for she expects to be his wife."

She hoped he would offer some remark, ask a question, say anything which would call for some word more definite from her lips in regard to Christine; but there was only silence in the long, bare room. Outside a little stir, a faint commotion, had arisen. The evening had turned warm, and though a low fire burned in the grate, she had left her seat, and opened one of the windows. It might be this which had filled the room with a sound as of muffled voices and moving feet, bringing the street strangely near. She checked her fingers, drawing the needle in and out, to listen.

Everything startled her now ; she was nervous and weak, and easily alarmed by the conflicting reports which each day brought from the seat of war, as well as the strange rumors floating about town of possibilities nearer home. A convention, it was whispered, was in secret session even now to vote the state out of the Union. Were they not lingering here too long ?

"Hark ! what is that ?" as a low, continuous murmur, like the repressed voices of a multitude, seemed all at once to fill the room. The professor started to his feet, when, without word or warning, the door was thrown open, and Professor Payne appeared. His face was shrunk and gray with terror.

"There is a crowd about the house," he gasped, when he could find his voice. "I—I greatly fear for you, my friend. But perhaps you might escape now through the garden."

"Don't be alarmed," said Professor Dyce, laying his hand upon Katey's shoulder. She had fallen back upon her chair white and trembling. There was a strange, resonant ring in his voice, but no quaver of fear.

"Go, go," Katey tried to say.

"It is too late for that," he replied. "If they intend to threaten, they have surrounded the house already. But I think you exaggerate the danger."

The murmur of voices had risen to a shout of "Dyce ! Dyce !"

Then Professor Payne rose to the occasion. "I will speak to them," said the little man, moving towards the door. "They know my sentiments."

Professor Dyce had been hastily fastening the win-

dow shutters. He took Katey in his arms as though she had been a child, bore her through the dressing-closet, and laid her upon the bed in the room beyond. Then he returned to the parlor. It was the work of an instant. "Take care of my wife," to Professor Payne, and he was gone.

He closed the heavy outer door behind him, as he stepped out suddenly in the face of the crowd. The flaring gas-light below him lit up his form and the strong, calm face which betrayed no signs of fear. The unexpected appearance, when they had anticipated flight or resistance, took them by surprise, and in that one moment he had a chance to scan the mob which surged at his feet. It was led, he saw at once, by a bully, as such an assemblage invariably is — a great hulking fellow, whom he recognized at once as a man employed about the office of the lawyer who had opposed his claims to the estate he had recently gained. "Ah!" he said to himself, "it is easy to recognize the lever to this movement;" and he was confident as to the identity of certain shadowy forms hovering upon the outskirts of the crowd; public disturbances serve private ends often and well. For the most part it was made up of the idle and curious, among whom women were plainly discernible; one, with an old black shawl covering her figure, hid her pallid face and blinking eyes behind a thick veil.

"Ah, Jim Boles, is that you?" said the professor, in a cool, almost jocular tone of familiarity, singling out the leader, who had pressed to the front, surrounded by a staff of ragged, half-grown boys; "what do you want?"

The man had worked himself to the point of hero-

ism. He had even learned a little speech for the occasion, in which "liberty" and "the stars and bars," often repeated, were to act a telling part. This abrupt, simple question drove it at once from his mind, and seemed to reduce the whole affair to a very ordinary occurrence, with no opportunity for sentiment or poetry, in which he secretly delighted.

"Hang out the flag, d—n ye!" he added, under his breath, making up for his clipped eloquence by an oath, and bringing from under his coat, as he spoke, a small Confederate flag tightly furled, which was to have been waved at a certain point in his speech. The sight of it, the sudden flaming out of its colors before the crowd, whose excitement had fallen to curiosity, might have roused it to frenzy. So much could a bit of bunting do when it represented an idea for which men died!

The professor leaned down and took it carelessly. It was like gunpowder, he knew, and the eyes of the people before him were sparks. He rolled it still more closely in his hands, as though unconsciously, while he replied, "And make myself liable to arrest for treason? You forgot that the United States still holds jurisdiction here. You had better go home and to bed, Jim."

"You'll have to be up early to take down the shutters, you know," added a piping voice in the crowd.

A laugh rose around the already discomfited leader. One's followers are not always one's friends. "They seem to be just a talkin' pleasant like," one man explained to another, who was too far away to hear. And this ran down through the crowd, which began

slowly to disperse, followed by the laugh, which confirmed the impression that nothing was to be done, after all. In five minutes the street was deserted, or given up to its usual passers, when a squad of police came up the hill in great apparent haste to inquire into the disturbance.

"There is no disturbance, gentlemen," Professor Dyce replied. "I can only regret that you should have been annoyed by such a report," he added. But the sergeant blustered and stormed, and insisted upon placing a guard about the house for the night. "As you please," the professor said, coolly, turning to re-enter the door. But what was this figure shrinking back into the deep shadowy doorway?

"Katey!"

"Don't be angry; but indeed I could not stay there. It was no fault of his;" as poor little Professor Payne, who, true to his trust, would not be left, stepped out from behind her. There was no time to blame or praise, for the whole school, headed by Miss Hersey, came crowding in from the music-room at that moment, Clary, for once too frightened to cry, having outstripped the others.

"It is all over; and indeed there was no cause for alarm," the professor hastened to say, and dismissed them. In those days a man's foes were truly of his own household, he realized, when more than one pair of flashing eyes and white lips met his glance as the girls turned reluctantly back.

Miss Wormley appeared in their midst as they were saying good night. There was an unusual color in her face, and she breathed heavily, like one who had come in great haste. Something like rain-drops

sparkled upon her gown. Outside a sudden shower had risen — a gust of wind and rain, heavy and angry, beating against the windows, and drowning the sound of their voices.

“O, did you know — ?” began one of the girls in a shrill tone, recognizing her as a new comer.

She felt Professor Dyce’s keen eyes. In spite of her efforts, the color spread and deepened upon her face.

“Yes,” she replied, hastily ; “it was dreadful — was it not ?”

“O, *very*,” responded the professor, grimly, forcing her blinking eyes to meet his straightforward glance. “The shower, you mean ?” Then he turned and entered the parlor. She knew that he understood her, that he had fathomed her designs. Ah, well, she thought, then I may work openly. But that night she lost the opportunity forever.

Professor Payne and Miss Hersey awaited Professor Dyce in his parlor. He closed the door after him, threw himself into the chair he had left so suddenly earlier in the evening, and, resting his forehead upon his hands, seemed lost in thought.

“What is this, about a convention ?” he asked at last, abruptly, rousing himself.

Professor Payne looked timidly, fearfully, from one to another of the little group. They were all enemies to the cause, he knew. Still a few days, perhaps even hours later, it would be no secret. “It may adjourn to-night,” he replied ; and, with a sudden glow upon the faded cheeks, “we shall carry the state.”

“*You never will.*” Then Professor Dyce checked himself. Why discuss again the subject which of late

had never been broached between them? "Our time has come," he said to Katey. "We must leave at once." Years afterwards, looking back upon this hour, and the timid little man who had been his steadfast friend, it was comforting to remember that they trusted each other to the last, and, though they went far asunder as the poles, no bitter words passed between them. "And you—" to Miss Hersey—"will you go with us?"

The two women stood holding each other by the hand. Katey tightened her clasp. The color swept over Miss Hersey's face, then it was pale again.

"My home is here," she said. "No; I will stay."

"There is no time to lose," interrupted Professor Payne, nervously; "even now you may find it difficult to leave town, after what has occurred to-night. Certainly you can take nothing with you. The best plan would be to catch the midnight train north, at Littleton, if you could be carried over there."

And so the matter was finally decided, and Professor Payne hastened away to secure a conveyance, ostensibly for his own use.

The moment their conference was broken up, Katey retired to her bedroom to select a few necessary articles which could be thrust into a hand satchel, and arrange, as best she could, the remainder of her wardrobe and personal effects which were to be left behind.

She was kneeling upon the floor before a half-filled trunk, confusion and disorder about her, danger perhaps ahead, and yet happier than she had been for weeks. They were to take up their wanderings again. Where they were going she had not thought to ask.

It did not matter. Her hat and cloak were thrown upon a chair near by, ready to put on. A moment more and the professor would come for her. The door opened, and he entered the room.

"Don't let me disturb you. It is not yet time to start," he said, moving about restlessly as she went on with her work. All at once he paused at a little distance, his arms folded, his gaze upon her. "You have not asked where you are going."

"No," she answered, brightly; "I don't care."

"So that you leave here," he added. "You are right. It was folly to remain so long."

Why did he speak so sadly? Katey looked up in haste. Was he ill, that there should have come such a whiteness to his face? Care and the annoyances of the past few days had worn upon him. He should rest when they were once safely away.

"I think you had better go immediately to your sister-in-law. Jack wished it," he went on. "And Mrs. Estemere has, perhaps, arrived by this time. I shall take you there myself, and see that you are comfortably settled. You will be happy with your own friends, and I am glad to feel that you need want for nothing. I am not a poor man now, you know. But I shall arrange all that."

He spoke hurriedly, almost disconnectedly. Katey only stared, without reply, when he paused. She had not yet gathered the meaning of his words. Of course they should go to Josie, or to Delphine, if she had returned. Katey had not considered the subject until now, yet this was the most natural course to take, she knew. But what was this something beneath his words which shocked and startled her? What was he saying?

"I fear it was all a mistake from the beginning. But it is too late to go back to that now."

His voice sounded hoarse over the last words. His face was turned away. Then he went on in his usual deep, grave tone.

"I shall go at once to Washington, and apply for a position in the field or in some hospital; wherever I can hope to be of use."

"And leave ME?" She had found her voice at last. The words came like a cry of pain. The pretty white gown she was folding fell out of her hands, as she sprang from the floor. "O, you *wouldn't* do that. I should never be a care to you," she pleaded, hurriedly, forgetting her fears, her pride, everything but this terrible vision of a dark possible future. "I would go anywhere, do anything; I am not afraid of hardships; only take me. I can't be left behind," she cried. "Other women follow their husbands; why should not I? I know I am not very nice, but —"

"Child! what do you mean?" He seized her almost roughly, and held her off for an instant while he read the pale face with its trembling lines of pain and terror. Then he took her in his arms. "We do not deserve happiness," he said, solemnly, "since we have almost let it slip out of our hands."

"And you are not nice?" he added, presently. He laughed a low, happy laugh. "Ah, well, I will try to be resigned."

CHAPTER XXIX.

MARRIAGE BELLS.

THERE is a blaze of light in Delphine's city home, as though a summer day had awakened,—night though it is,—with its arms full of flowers. They trail, and blossom, and peep over arch and doorway; they hang from picture and chandelier; they blush and nestle, and give out their sweet perfume everywhere. The Estemeres have returned, and to-night they entertain their friends in honor of Katey's marriage and Jack's coming home. For Jack has won a short leave of absence at last, though he has resigned all thought of arranging Katey's affairs anew.

"You never could take care of yourself," he said, when he appeared unexpectedly to them all one day, and had released Katey from his bearish, brotherly embrace.

"I know," she replied, "and so what could I do but allow some one else that troublesome privilege!" and she presented her husband. Jack gave him one keen glance from his handsome eyes as the professor came forward, by no means abashed by this encounter, with a laugh on his lips over Katey's characteristic speech, and the hatchet which Jack had been brandishing over Katey's captor all the way from the banks of the Potomac was buried on the spot.

In one of the upper rooms of the house Katey is putting the last touches to her toilet for the evening. Happy Katey ! who feels that she has nothing more to desire, and is almost frightened at the great joy which has come to her. She sweeps down the long room like a queen in her trailing robes, white and shimmering. There are orange flowers in her hair, and a veil of soft lace, caught at her shoulders, falls away from her pretty bare arms. She recalls her wedding day and the dusty, torn, gray gown, and smiles over the remembrance. She will always preserve it, to the day of her death ; and yet it is pleasant to be a bride, and wear a wedding gown, she thinks to-night. But she forgets it all when she kneels upon the hearth-rug before the professor.

" And so you always remembered me ? " she says, dreamily, her eyes upon the fire, taking up the conversation interrupted a moment before.

" Yes ; from the night at the party, when you came running up the stairs in that odd flowered gown, with my crutch in your hand. I used to fancy, when I was abroad, years afterwards, that I would come home and find you out some day. I had learned your name, you know."

" But you never told me at La Fayette that we had met before. Perhaps you had forgotten."

" By no means ; on the contrary, I recognized your name at once, and flatter myself that my influence helped to turn the scale in your favor against the many applicants for the place you sought in the school. You can imagine, perhaps, my curiosity in regard to you ; you know the surprise and consternation the sight of you at first awakened, for I did not

hear your name at all that evening at Mrs. Durant's, and never for a moment suspected that you were the Miss Earle I was on my way to La Fayette to meet. The double surprise after having seen you masquerading at the Junction was almost overpowering. You were a fascinating problem in those few first weeks — a dangerous one, I found later."

"And no problem at all, finally," Katey added, with a soft little laugh.

"No; but something infinitely better. One does not care to take an enigma for a wife. There are certain dangerous possibilities in the solution. But I had almost forgotten;" and he put a letter into her hand.

"From Mina Hauser!" There was a flutter of cards tied with white ribbons, as Katey opened the envelope. "So Mina and Hans are married at last!" she exclaimed, joyously; "but what is this?" and she drew out a little note, not in Mina's round hand. It was from Christine, and as she read, Katey's face grew warm and strangely bright. It was written in the hospital, Camp Fairfax, Virginia, and a few lines will suffice to quote here. "I know it all," Christine wrote; "Dacre has told me while I sat here holding his hand; and we are to be married to-morrow. I wanted to write you now, before I slept. Dear Katey, how can I ever bless you enough? He wished me to write. He believes you will be glad to know. He has been very near death; but now he will live, the doctor says. O, you don't know what that means to me. He has won his shoulder-straps, and when he is able to return to camp, I am to go with him. I am never to leave him again. And Mina is married and

happy, and father and Wulf are well ; but no one is so happy as I, dear Katey. I laugh and sing, but more often I cry. To laugh is not enough. It seems as though one must shed tears over such great joy."

"So it has all come right at last," Katey says, softly, when the professor has put the letter again into her hands. "Not in my way ; but God's ways are better than ours."

She rests her cheek against his knee, thoughtful and still. The little French clock upon the mantel marks the passing moments, with faint subdued ticks like heart-beats.

"Please salute the bride," she says, presently, raising the broad, smooth forehead, with its coronet of dark hair ; "they always salute the bride, you know."

He takes the sweet, grave face between his hands, and kisses her lips.

"And they offer good wishes," she adds.

"God bless you, my wife !"

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